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THE ETERNAL HUSBAND

I
VELCHANINOV

SUMMER CAME—and Velchaninov, beyond all expectation, stayed in Petersburg. His trip to the south of Russia fell through, and there was no end to his case in sight. This case—a lawsuit over an estate—was taking a most nasty turn. Three months earlier it had looked quite uncomplicated, all but indisputable; but everything had changed somehow suddenly. “And generally everything has begun to change for the worse!”—Velchaninov began repeating this phrase to himself gloatingly and frequently. He hired a clever, expensive, famous lawyer, and did not mind the cost; but in impatience and from insecurity he got to busying himself with the case as well: read and wrote documents which the lawyer uniformly rejected, kept running around to various offices, made inquiries, and most likely hindered everything considerably; at least the lawyer complained and urged him to go to the country. But he could not even make up his mind to go to the country. The dust, the stuffiness, the white nights of Petersburg, which chafed his nerves—this was what he enjoyed in Petersburg. His apartment, recently rented, was somewhere near the Bolshoi Theater, and this, too, had not worked out; “nothing works out!” His hypochondria was increasing day by day; but he had long been inclined to hypochondria.

This was a man who had lived much and broadly, now far from young, about thirty-eight or even thirty-nine, and all this “old age”—as he himself put it—had come upon him “almost quite unexpectedly”; but he understood himself that he had aged not in the quantity, but rather, so to speak, in the quality of his years, and that if his infirmities had indeed begun, it was rather from within than from without. By the look of him, he still seemed a fine man. He was a tall and sturdy fellow, with thick, light brown hair and not a trace of gray on his head, and with a long brown beard almost halfway down his chest; as if somewhat clumsy and gone to seed at first sight, but, on closer inspection, you would at once discern in him a gentleman of excellent seasoning and who had once received a most high-society upbringing. Now, too, Velchaninov’s manners were free, bold, and even graceful, despite all his well-acquired peevishness and bagginess. And even to this day he was filled with the most unshakable, most impudent high-society self-confidence, the extent of which he perhaps did not suspect in himself, despite his being not only an intelligent, but sometimes even a sensible man, almost educated and unquestionably gifted. The color of his face, open and ruddy, had been distinguished in the old days by a feminine tenderness and had attracted the attention of women; now, too, someone would look at him and say: “There’s a hale fellow! Hale and hearty!” And yet this “hale fellow” was cruelly afflicted with hypochondria. His eyes, large and pale blue, also used to have much winsomeness in them ten years ago; they were such light, such merry and carefree eyes, that they inadvertently attracted everyone he came across. Now, nearing the age of forty, the brightness and kindness had almost died out in these eyes, already surrounded with light wrinkles; there appeared in them, on the contrary, the cynicism of a weary and not entirely moral man, cunning, mockery most often, and another new shade that had not been there before: a shade of sorrow and pain—a sort of distracted sorrow, as if without object, but intense. This sorrow was especially manifest when he was left alone. And, strangely, this man, so boisterous, merry, and carefree just two years ago, who was so good at telling such amusing stories—now liked nothing better than to be left entirely alone. He deliberately abandoned his numerous acquaintances, whom even now he might not have abandoned, despite the definitive disorder of his financial situation. True, vanity also helped here: with his insecurity and vanity it was impossible to endure former acquaintances. But his vanity, too, began gradually to change in isolation. It did not diminish—even quite the contrary; but it began to degenerate into some peculiar sort of vanity, which had not been there before; he began to suffer sometimes from entirely different causes than usual before—from unexpected causes, entirely unthinkable before, from “more higher” causes than previously—“if it can be put that way, if there actually are higher and lower causes...” That he added himself.

Yes, he did come to that as well; he was now struggling with some *higher* causes, of which he had not even stopped to think before. In his mind and according to his conscience, he called “higher” all those “causes” which (to his surprise) he was in no way able to laugh at in himself—something which had not happened till then—in himself, naturally; oh, in society it was a different matter! He knew perfectly well that the circumstances needed only to arise—and the next day he would quite calmly renounce, aloud, despite all the mysterious and reverential decisions of his conscience, all these “higher causes” and himself be the first to make fun of them, naturally without admitting anything. And this was indeed so, despite the certain, even quite considerable, share of independence of thought he had won lately from the “lower causes” that had hitherto possessed him. And how many times, getting out of bed in the morning, had he begun to be ashamed of the thoughts and feelings he had lived through during the night’s insomnia! (And of late he had been suffering constantly from insomnia.) He had long since noticed that he was becoming extremely insecure in all things, both important and trifling, and therefore he resolved to trust himself as little as possible. However, certain facts stood out which could in no way be acknowledged as actually existing. Of late, at night sometimes, his thoughts and sensations changed almost completely as compared with his usual ones and for the most part did not at all resemble those that fell to the first half of his day. He was struck by this—and even consulted a famous doctor, though, true, the man was his acquaintance; naturally, he brought it up jokingly. He received the response that the fact of a change and even a splitting of thoughts and sensations at night during insomnia, and at night generally—is a universal fact among people of “strong thoughts and strong feelings”—that the convictions of a whole lifetime would sometimes change all at once under the

melancholy influence of night and insomnia; suddenly, out of the blue, the most fateful decisions would be taken; but that, of course, there is measure in all things—and if, finally, the subject feels this split too much, so that it reaches the point of suffering, that is unquestionably a sign that illness has set in; and therefore something ought to be undertaken without delay. Best of all would be to change one's way of life radically, to change one's diet or even undertake a journey. A laxative would, of course, be helpful.

Velchaninov listened no further, but for him the illness was fully proven.

"And so all this is just an illness, all this 'higher' is just an illness and nothing more!" he sometimes exclaimed caustically to himself. He wanted very much not to agree.

Soon, however, the same thing that used to happen in exclusively nighttime hours began to repeat itself in the mornings, but with greater bile than at night, with anger instead of repentance, with mockery instead of tenderheartedness. Essentially, it was certain events from his past and long-past life that returned more and more often to his memory, "suddenly and God knows why," but that returned in some special way. Velchaninov had long been complaining, for instance, of a loss of memory: he would forget the faces of his acquaintances, who would get offended with him when they met; a book read six months earlier would sometimes be completely forgotten in that length of time. And what then?—despite this obvious daily loss of memory (which worried him very much)—all that had seemed long past, all that had even been completely forgotten for ten, for fifteen years—all this now suddenly came back to his memory, but with such an amazing precision of impressions and details that it was as if he were living it over again. Some of the facts he remembered had been so well forgotten that it seemed miracle enough to him that they could be remembered. But that was not yet all; for who among people who have lived broadly does not have memories of a certain sort? But the thing was that all these remembrances now came back as if with some completely new, unexpected, and previously quite unthinkable point of view on the fact, as if prepared by someone. Why did certain memories now seem altogether criminal to him? And these mental judgments were not the only thing; his dark, solitary, and sick mind he might not have believed; but it went as far as curses and all but tears, inwardly if not outwardly. Two years ago he would not have believed it if he had been told he would one day weep! At first, however, what he remembered was more of a caustic than of a sentimental sort: he remembered certain social mishaps, humiliations; he recalled, for instance, how he had been "slandered by some intriguer," with the result that he stopped being received in a certain house—how, for instance, and even not so long ago, he had been positively and publicly offended and had not challenged the offender to a duel—how he had once been brought up short by a most witty epigram, in a circle of the prettiest women, and had been at a loss for a reply. He even remembered two or three unpaid debts, trifling ones, true, but debts of honor, and to such people as he no longer kept company with and of whom he had even begun to speak ill. He also suffered (but only in the most evil moments) from the remembrance of two most foolishly squandered fortunes, each of them considerable. But soon he also began to have remembrances of "higher" things.

Suddenly, for instance, "out of the blue" he remembered the forgotten—and forgotten by him in the highest degree—figure of one kindly little official, gray-haired and ridiculous, whom he had insulted once long, long ago, publicly and with impunity and solely from braggadocio: only so as not to lose a funny and fortunate quip, which brought him fame and was repeated afterward. He had forgotten the fact so well that he could not even remember the old man's last name, though all the circumstances of the adventure presented themselves with inconceivable clarity. He vividly remembered that the old man was then defending his daughter, who lived with him and had gone too long unmarried, and of whom some sort of rumors had begun to spread in town. The old man tried to respond and got angry, but suddenly burst into sobs before the whole company, which even produced a certain impression. They ended by getting him drunk on champagne for the fun of it, and had themselves a good laugh. And now, when Velchaninov remembered "out of the blue" how the old fellow had wept, covering his face with his hands like a child, it suddenly seemed to him that he had never forgotten it. And, strangely, all this had seemed very funny to him at the time; but now—quite the contrary, and precisely in the details, precisely in the covering of his face with his hands. Then he remembered how, solely for the sake of a joke, he had slandered the very pretty wife of a schoolteacher, and the slander had reached the husband. Velchaninov had soon left that little town and did not know how the consequences of his slander had ended, but now he suddenly began to imagine the end of those consequences—and God knows where his imagination might have taken him, if a much closer memory had not suddenly presented itself, of a certain girl, from simple tradespeople, whom he did not even like and of whom, he had to confess, he was ashamed, but whom, not knowing why himself, he got pregnant, and then just abandoned along with the child, without even saying good-bye (true, he had no time), when he left Petersburg. Afterward he looked for the girl for a whole year, but was simply unable to find her. However, there turned out to be perhaps hundreds of such memories—and it even seemed that each memory dragged dozens of others after it. Gradually his vanity also began to suffer.

We have already said that his vanity degenerated into something peculiar. That was true. There were moments (rare, however) when he sometimes reached such self-abandon that he was not even ashamed of not having his own carriage, of dragging about on foot to official places, of having become somewhat negligent in his dress—and if perchance one of his old acquaintances looked him over mockingly in the street, or simply decided not to recognize him, he truly had enough arrogance not even to wince. Seriously not to wince, in reality, not only in appearance. Naturally, this happened rarely, these were only moments of self-abandon and irritation, but even so his vanity began gradually to withdraw from former pretexts and to concentrate itself around one question that constantly came to his mind.

"So then," he would sometimes begin thinking satirically (and he almost always began with the satirical when thinking about himself), "so then, someone there is concerned with correcting my morals and is sending me these cursed memories and 'tears of repentance.' Let them, it's nothing! it's all shooting with blanks! Don't I know for sure, for surer than sure, that despite all these tearful repentances and self-condemnations, there isn't a drop of independence in me, despite my most stupid forty years! If some such temptation should happen along tomorrow, well, for instance, if the circumstances were again such that it would profit me to spread the rumor that the teacher's wife was receiving presents from me—I'd be sure to spread it, I wouldn't flinch—and the thing would turn out even worse, more vile, than the first time, because this would already be the second time and not the first. Well, if I were to be insulted again, now, by that princeling, his

mother's only son, whose leg I shot off eleven years ago—I'd challenge him at once and set him on a peg leg again. Well, aren't these blank shots, then, and what's the sense in them! and why these reminders, if I can't settle things for myself with any degree of decency!"

And though the fact with the teacher's wife was not repeated, though he did not set anyone on a peg leg, the mere thought that this would certainly have to be repeated, if the circumstances were such, nearly killed him... at times. One could not, in fact, suffer from memories constantly; one could rest and enjoy oneself—in the intermissions.

And so Velchaninov did: he was ready to enjoy himself in the intermissions; but, all the same, the longer it went on, the more disagreeable his life in Petersburg became. July was approaching. A resolve sometimes flashed in him to drop everything, including the lawsuit itself, and go off somewhere without looking back, somehow suddenly, inadvertently, down to the Crimea, for instance. But an hour later, usually, he was already despising his thought and laughing at it: "These nasty thoughts won't cease in any South, if they've already started and if I'm at least a somewhat decent man, and that means there's no point in running away from them, and no reason to.

"And why run away?" he went on philosophizing from grief. "It's so dusty here, so stuffy, everything's so dirty in this house; in these offices I hang about in, among all these practical people—there's so much of the most mousy bustle, so much of the most jostling worry; in all these people who stay on in the city, in all these faces flitting by from morning to evening—all their selfishness, all their simple-hearted insolence, all the cowardice of their little souls, all the chickenness of their little hearts is so naively and frankly told—that it's really a paradise for a hypochondriac, speaking most seriously! Everything's frank, everything's clear, everything even finds it unnecessary to cover itself up, the way our ladies do somewhere in the country or taking the waters abroad—and therefore everything's much more worthy of the fullest respect, if only for this frankness and simplicity alone... I won't go anywhere! I may crack here, but I won't go anywhere!..."

II THE GENTLEMAN WITH CRAPE ON HIS HAT

It was the third of July. The stuffiness and heat were unbearable. For Velchaninov the day turned out to be a most bustling one: all morning he had to walk and drive around, and the future held for him the absolute need to visit that evening a certain necessary gentleman, a businessman and state councillor, at his country house somewhere on the Black River,¹ and catch him unexpectedly at home. Sometime after five, Velchaninov finally entered a certain restaurant (rather dubious, but French) on Nevsky Prospect, near the Police Bridge, sat down in his usual corner at his table, and asked for his daily dinner.

He ate a one-ruble dinner daily and paid separately for the wine, considering this a sacrifice sensibly offered up to his disordered circumstances. Surprised that it was possible to eat such trash, he nevertheless finished everything to the last crumb—and each time with such appetite as if he had not eaten for three days. "There's something morbid about it," he occasionally muttered to himself, noting his appetite. But this time he sat down at his table in the nastiest state of mind, vexedly flung his hat away somewhere, leaned on his elbow, and fell to thinking. Let his neighbor, having dinner at the next table, make some noise, or a serving boy not understand him from the first word—and he, who knew so well how to be polite and, when necessary, so haughtily imperturbable, would surely raise a row like a cadet, and perhaps make a scandal.

The soup was served, he took the spoon, but suddenly, before dipping it, he dropped the spoon on the table and all but jumped up from his chair. An unexpected thought suddenly dawned on him: at that moment—and God knows by what process—he suddenly understood fully the cause of his anguish, his special, particular anguish, which had already tormented him for several days in a row, the whole time lately, which had fastened on to him God knows how and, God knows why, refused to get unfastened; and now he all at once saw and understood everything like the palm of his hand.

"It's all that hat!" he murmured as if inspired. "Just simply and solely that cursed round hat with the loathsome funeral crape on it, that's the cause of it all!"

He began to think—and the further he thought into it, the gloomier he became and the more astonishing "the whole event" became in his eyes.

"But... but what sort of event is it, anyhow?" he tried to protest, not trusting himself. "Is there anything in it that remotely resembles an event?"

The whole thing consisted in this: almost two weeks ago (he really did not remember, but it seemed like two weeks), he had met for the first time, in the street, somewhere at the corner of Podiachesky and Meshchansky Streets, a gentleman with crape on his hat. The gentleman was like everybody else, there was nothing special about him, he had passed by quickly, but he had glanced at Velchaninov somehow much too intently and for some reason had at once greatly attracted his attention. At least his physiognomy had seemed familiar to Velchaninov. He had apparently met it sometime somewhere. "Ah, anyhow, haven't I met thousands of physiognomies in my life? One can't remember them all!" Having gone on some twenty paces, he seemed to have forgotten the encounter already, despite his first impression. But the impression nevertheless lingered for the whole day—and a rather original one: in the form of some pointless, peculiar anger. Now, two weeks later, he recalled it all clearly, he also recalled failing completely to understand the source of his anger—to the point of not even once connecting and juxtaposing his nasty state of mind all that evening with the morning's encounter. But the gentleman hastened to give a reminder of himself, and the next day again ran into Velchaninov on Nevsky Prospect and again looked at him somehow strangely. Velchaninov spat, but, having spat, was at once surprised at his spitting. True, there are physiognomies that instantly provoke a pointless and aimless revulsion. "Yes, I actually met him somewhere," he muttered pensively, half an hour after the encounter. Then again for the whole evening he was in the nastiest state of mind; he even had some bad dream during the night, and still it did not occur to him that the whole cause of this new and peculiar spleen of his—was just merely the earlier encounter with the mourning gentleman, though that evening he had remembered him more than once. He even had a fleeting fit of anger, that "such

trash” dared to get remembered for so long; and he would certainly have considered it humiliating to ascribe all his anxiety to the man, if such a thought had occurred to him. Two days later they met again, in a crowd, getting off some Neva steamer. This third time Velchaninov was ready to swear that the gentleman in the mourning hat recognized him and strained toward him, drawn back and pushed by the crowd; it seemed he even “dared” to reach out his hand to him; perhaps he even cried out and called him by name. This last, however, Velchaninov did not hear clearly, but... “who, however, is this rascal and why doesn’t he approach me, if in fact he recognizes me and would like so much to approach?” he thought spitefully, getting into a cab and going off toward the Smolny monastery. Half an hour later he was arguing loudly with his lawyer, but that evening and night he was again in the vilest and most fantastic anguish. “Is my bile not rising?” he asked himself suspiciously, looking in the mirror.

This was the third encounter. Then for five days in a row he encountered decidedly “no one,” and of the “rascal” there was not a sound. And yet every now and then the gentleman with crape on his hat would be remembered. Velchaninov caught himself at it with some surprise. “Am I pining for him, or what?—Hm!... And it must be that he also has a lot to do in Petersburg—and for whom is this crape of his? He evidently recognized me, but I don’t recognize him. And why do these people wear crape? It somehow doesn’t become them... I suppose if I look at him more closely, I’ll recognize him...”

And something was as if beginning to stir in his memories, like some familiar but for some reason suddenly forgotten word, which you try as hard as you can to remember; you know it perfectly—and you know that you know it; you know precisely what it means, you circle around it; but the word simply refuses to be remembered, no matter how you struggle over it!

“It was... It was long ago... and it was somewhere... There was... there was ...—well, devil take it all, whatever there was or wasn’t!...” he suddenly cried out spitefully. “And is it worth befouling and humiliating myself over this rascal!...”

He got terribly angry; but in the evening, when he suddenly recalled that he had gotten angry that day, and “terribly” so—it felt extremely unpleasant to him; as if someone had caught him at something. He was embarrassed and surprised:

“It means, then, that there are reasons for my getting so angry... out of the blue... just from remembering...” He did not finish his thought.

And the next day he got still angrier, but this time it seemed to him that there was a cause and that he was perfectly right; it was “an unheard-of impertinence”: the thing was that a fourth encounter had taken place. The gentleman with the crape had appeared again, as if from under the ground. Velchaninov had only just caught in the street that very state councillor and necessary gentleman whom he was now trying to catch by coming upon him by chance at his country house, because this official, barely acquainted with Velchaninov, but needed for his case, refused to be caught, then as now, and was hiding as well as he could, not wishing for his part to meet with Velchaninov; rejoicing that he had finally run into him, Velchaninov walked beside him, hurrying, peeking into his eyes, and trying as well as he could to guide the gray-haired old fox toward a certain theme, toward a certain conversation in which he might divulge and let drop one much-sought and long-awaited little phrase; but the gray-haired old fox also kept his own counsel, laughed it off, and said nothing—and then, precisely at this extremely tricky moment, Velchaninov’s eye suddenly picked out, across the street, the gentleman with crape on his hat. He was standing there and gazing intently at them both; he was watching them—that was obvious—and even seemed to be chuckling.

“Devil take it!” Velchaninov flew into a rage, having already parted from the official and ascribing all his failure with him to the sudden appearance of this “impudent fellow.” “Devil take it, is he spying on me, or what! He’s obviously keeping watch on me! Has somebody hired him, or what, and... and... and, by God, he was chuckling! I’ll beat him up, by God... Too bad I don’t carry a stick! I’ll buy a stick! I won’t leave it like this! Who is he? I absolutely must know who he is!”

Finally—exactly three days after this (fourth) encounter—we find Velchaninov in his restaurant, as we have already described him, now completely and seriously alarmed, and even somewhat at a loss. He even could not help admitting it himself, despite all his pride. He was forced, finally, to realize, having juxtaposed all the circumstances, that all his spleen, all this *peculiar* anguish and all his two-week-long alarm—had been caused by none other than this same mourning gentleman, “despite all his nonentity.”

“Granted I’m a hypochondriac,” thought Velchaninov, “and am therefore ready to make an elephant out of a gnat, but, all the same, is it any easier for me if all this *might be* merely a fantasy? If every such rogue is able to turn a man completely upside down, then it’s... it’s...”

Indeed, in this (fifth) encounter today, which so alarmed Velchaninov, the elephant seemed almost altogether a gnat: the gentleman, as before, whisked past, but this time no longer examining Velchaninov and not making a show, as before, of recognizing him—but, on the contrary, lowering his eyes and seeming to wish very much not to be noticed himself. Velchaninov turned and shouted to him at the top of his voice:

“Hey, you! crape-hat! So now you’re hiding! Wait—who are you?”

The question (and the whole shout) was quite witless. But Velchaninov realized it only after he shouted. At this shout—the gentleman turned, paused for a moment, became flustered, smiled, was about to say something, to do something—for a moment, obviously, was in terrible indecision, and suddenly—turned and ran away without looking back. Velchaninov gazed after him in astonishment.

“And what?” he thought, “what if it’s not in fact he who is bothering me, but, on the contrary, I him, and that’s the whole thing?”

After dinner, he hastened off to the official in his country house. He did not find the official; he was told that “the master has not come back since morning, and is unlikely to come back tonight before three or four o’clock, because he is staying in town for a name-day party.” This was such a “bother” that, in his first fit of rage, Velchaninov decided to go to the name-day party himself and in fact even set off; but, realizing on the way that this was going too far, he dismissed the coachman halfway there and dragged himself on foot to his place near the Bolshoi Theater. He felt a need for movement. To calm his agitated nerves, he needed to have a good night’s sleep at all costs, despite his insomnia; and to fall asleep, he had at least to be tired. Thus he reached his place only at half past ten, for it was no small distance—and he indeed

got very tired.

The apartment he had rented in March, which he so gleefully denounced and criticized, making excuses to himself that it was “all on the march,” and that he “got stuck” in Petersburg accidentally, because of this “cursed lawsuit”—this apartment of his was not at all as bad and indecent as he said it was. The entrance was indeed a bit dark and “grimy,” under the gateway; but the apartment itself, on the second floor, consisted of two big, bright, high-ceilinged rooms, separated from each other by a dark hall, and thus looking one onto the street, the other onto the courtyard. The one with windows on the courtyard had an adjacent little study meant to serve as a bedroom; but Velchaninov had books and papers there, lying about in disorder; he slept in one of the big rooms, the one with windows on the street. His bed was made up for him on the sofa. He had quite good, though secondhand, furniture, and there were, besides, even some expensive objects—fragments of former well-being: porcelain and bronze knick-knacks, large and genuine Bukhara rugs; even two rather good paintings survived; but everything had been in obvious disorder, not in place and even covered with dust, since his servant girl Pelageya went to visit her family in Novgorod and left him alone. This strange fact of a bachelor and man of society, who still wished to preserve his gentlemanliness, keeping a single girl as a servant, almost made Velchaninov blush, though he was very pleased with this Pelageya. The girl had entered his employment at the moment of his moving into this apartment in the spring, from the household of acquaintances of his who had gone abroad, and she had brought order to the place. But at her departure he had not ventured to hire another female servant; nor was it worthwhile hiring a lackey for a short term, and besides he did not like lackeys. So it was arranged that the tidying up would be done each morning by Mavra, the sister of the caretaker's wife, with whom he left the key on his way out, and who did precisely nothing, took the money, and, it seems, was pilfering. But he had already waved his hand at it all and was even pleased to be left at home quite alone. Yet there is measure in all things—and his nerves decidedly refused at times, in certain bilious moments, to endure all this “muck,” and, returning home, he entered his rooms almost every time with disgust.

But this time he barely took the trouble to undress, threw himself on his bed, and irritably decided not to think about anything, but to fall asleep at all costs “this very minute.” And, strangely, he suddenly fell asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow; this had not happened to him for almost a month.

He slept for about three hours, but it was a troubled sleep; he dreamed some strange dreams, such as one dreams in fever. They had to do with some crime he had supposedly committed and kept secret, and of which he was unanimously accused by people who were constantly coming into his place from somewhere. A terrible crowd gathered, yet people still kept coming in, so that the door could no longer be closed, but stood wide open. But all interest finally concentrated on one strange man, someone very closely acquainted with him at some time, who had since died, and now for some reason also suddenly came into his room. The most tormenting thing was that Velchaninov did not know who the man was, had forgotten his name and simply could not remember it; he knew only that he had once loved him very much. It was as if all the rest of the people who had come also expected the most important word from this man: either an accusation or a vindication of Velchaninov—and they were all impatient. But he sat motionless at the table, kept silent, and refused to speak. The noise would not subside, his vexation grew stronger, and suddenly Velchaninov, in a rage, struck the man, because he refused to speak, and felt a strange pleasure in it. His heart sank with horror and suffering at his action, yet it was in this sinking that the pleasure consisted. Completely frenzied, he struck a second and a third time, and in some sort of intoxication from fury and fear, which reached the point of madness, but also contained in itself an infinite pleasure, he no longer counted the blows, but struck without stopping. He wanted to destroy all, all of *it*. Suddenly something happened; everyone shouted terribly and turned expectantly to the door, and at that moment there came three resounding strokes of the bell, with such force as if someone wanted to tear it off the door. Velchaninov woke up, instantly came to his senses, flew out of bed, and rushed to the door; he was absolutely sure that the ringing of the bell had not been a dream and that someone had actually rung for him that minute. “It would be far too unnatural if such a clear, such an actual, tangible ringing were just my dream!”

But, to his surprise, the ringing of the bell also turned out to be a dream. He opened the door and went out to the hall, even peeked onto the stairs—there was decidedly no one. The bell hung motionless. Marveling, but also rejoicing, he went back to the room. As he was lighting the candle, he remembered that the door had only been shut, but not locked with key or hook. Before, too, when he came home, he had often forgotten to lock the door for the night, considering it a matter of no importance. Pelageya had reprimanded him several times for it. He went back to the hall to lock the door, opened it once more and looked out, then closed it just with the hook, but was still too lazy to turn the key. The clock struck two-thirty; it meant he had slept for three hours.

His dream had agitated him so much that he did not want to go back to bed right away and decided to pace the room for some half an hour—“time enough to smoke a cigar.” Having dressed hastily, he went up to the window, raised the thick damask curtain and the white blind behind it. Outside it was already quite light. The bright summer Petersburg nights always produced a nervous irritation in him and lately had only contributed to his insomnia, so that about two weeks ago he had purposely provided his windows with these thick damask curtains, which did not let in any light when completely closed. Having let in the light and forgetting the burning candle on the table, he began pacing back and forth still with some heavy and sick feeling. The impression of the dream still worked. The serious suffering at having raised his hand against this man and beaten him went on.

“And this man doesn't even exist and never did, it's all a dream, so what am I whining about?”

With bitterness and as if all his cares converged in this, he began to think that he was decidedly becoming sick, a “sick person.”

It had always been hard for him to admit that he was getting old or feeble, and out of spite, in his bad moments, he exaggerated both the one and the other, on purpose, to taunt himself.

“Old age! I'm getting quite old,” he muttered, pacing, “I'm losing my memory, seeing phantoms, dreams, bells ringing... Devil take it! I know from experience that such dreams have always been a sign of fever in me... I'm sure this whole ‘story’ with this crape is also perhaps a dream. I decidedly thought right yesterday: it's I, I who keep bothering him, and not he me! I made up a poem out of him, and hid under the table from fear myself. And why do I call him a

rascal? He may be quite a decent man. True, his face is disagreeable, though nothing especially unattractive; he's dressed like everybody else. Only his look is somehow... I'm at it again! about him again! and what the devil do I care about his look? What, can't I live without this... gallowsbird?"

Among other thoughts that popped into his head, one also wounded him painfully: he suddenly became as if convinced that this gentleman with the crape had once been acquainted with him in a friendly way and now, meeting him, was making fun of him, because he knew some big former secret of his, and saw him now in such humiliating circumstances. Mechanically, he went up to the window to open it and breathe the night air, and—all at once gave a great start: it seemed to him that something unheard-of and extraordinary suddenly occurred before him.

He had not yet had time to open the window, but hastened to slip behind the corner of the window niche and hide himself: on the deserted sidewalk opposite he had suddenly seen, right in front of the house, the gentleman with crape on his hat. The gentleman was standing on the sidewalk facing his windows, but evidently without noticing him, and was examining the house with curiosity, as if trying to figure something out. It seemed he was pondering something and as if making up his mind to do it; he raised his hand and as if put a finger to his forehead. Finally, he made up his mind: he looked furtively around and, on tiptoe, stealthily, began hurriedly to cross the street. That was it: he went to their gate, through the door (which in summer sometimes stayed unbolted till three in the morning). "He's coming to me," quickly flashed in Velchaninov, and suddenly, headlong and also on tiptoe, he rushed to the door and—stopped in front of it, stock-still in expectation, lightly resting his twitching right hand on the door hook he had fastened earlier and listening as hard as he could for the rustle of the expected footsteps on the stairs.

His heart was pounding so that he was afraid he might not hear the stranger tiptoeing up the stairs. He did not understand the fact, but he felt everything with some tenfold fullness. As if his earlier dream had merged with reality. Velchaninov was brave by nature. He liked sometimes to carry his fearlessness in the face of danger to the point of a certain swagger—even if no one was watching him, just so as to admire himself. But now there was something else there as well. The recent hypochondriac and insecure whiner was completely transformed; this was now a totally different man. Nervous, inaudible laughter was bursting from his breast. From behind the closed door he could guess the stranger's every move.

"Ah! there he is coming up, he's here, he's looking around; listening down the stairs; barely breathing, sneaking... ah! he's taken hold of the handle, he's pulling, trying! he was counting on finding my place unlocked! That means he knows I sometimes forget to lock it! He's pulling the handle again; what, does he think the hook will pop out? He's sorry to go away! Sorry to leave with nothing?"

And, indeed, everything must certainly have been happening as he pictured it: someone was indeed standing outside the door and kept gently, inaudibly trying the lock and pulling at the handle and—"so, naturally, had some purpose." But Velchaninov already had the solution of the problem ready, and, with a sort of ecstasy, was waiting for the right moment, calculating and taking aim; he had an invincible desire to suddenly lift the hook, suddenly fling the door open and find himself face-to-face with the "bogey." To say, "And what are you doing here, my dear sir?"

And so it happened; seizing the moment, he suddenly lifted the hook, pushed the door, and—nearly bumped into the gentleman with crape on his hat.

III

PAVEL PAVLOVICH TRUSOTSKY

The man as if froze on the spot. The two stood opposite each other on the threshold, and looked fixedly into each other's eyes. Several moments passed in this way, and suddenly—Velchaninov recognized his visitor!

At the same time, the visitor evidently also guessed that Velchaninov recognized him perfectly: it flashed in his eyes. In one instant his whole face as if melted into the sweetest smile.

"I surely have the pleasure of speaking with Alexei Ivanovich?" he nearly sang out in the tenderest voice, comically unsuited to the circumstances.

"But can it be that you are Pavel Pavlovich Trusotsky?" Velchaninov, too, finally managed to say with a puzzled look.

"You and I were acquainted some nine years ago in T——, and—if you will permit me to recall—were friendly acquaintances."

"Yes, sir... maybe so, sir... but it's now three o'clock, and you spent a whole ten minutes trying to see if my door was locked or not..."

"Three o'clock!" the visitor cried, taking out his watch and even being ruefully surprised. "Exactly right: three! Excuse me, Alexei Ivanovich, I ought to have realized it when I came in; I'm even ashamed. I'll stop by and have a talk with you one of these days, but now..."

"Ah, no! if we're to have a talk, let's have it right now, please!" Velchaninov recollected himself. "Kindly come this way, across the threshold; to my rooms, sir. You yourself, of course, were intending to come in, and not just to pass by at night to check the locks..."

He was agitated and at the same time as if taken aback, and felt unable to collect himself. He was even ashamed: no mystery, no danger—nothing remained of the whole phantasmagoria; there turned up only the stupid figure of some Pavel Pavlovich. But, nevertheless, he by no means believed it was as simple as that; he had a vague and fearful presentiment of something. Seating the visitor in an armchair, he impatiently sat down on his bed, a step away from the armchair, leaned forward, his palms resting on his knees, and waited irritably for the man to speak. He greedily examined and recalled him. But, strangely, the man was silent and seemed not to understand at all that he was "obliged" to speak immediately; on the contrary, he himself looked at his host with eyes that were as if expecting something. It might have been that he was simply timid, feeling some initial awkwardness, like a mouse in a mousetrap; but Velchaninov got angry.

"What's with you!" he cried. "I don't suppose you're a fantasy or a dream! Have you shown up here to play the dead

man? Explain yourself, my dear!"

The visitor stirred, smiled, and began warily: "As far as I can see, you find it, first of all, even striking that I came at such an hour and—under such particular circumstances, sir... So that, remembering all past things and how we parted, sir—I find it strange even now, sir... However, I did not even have any intention of calling on you, and if it has turned out this way, it was—accidentally, sir..."

"How, accidentally! I saw you from the window, running across the street on tiptoe!"

"Ah, you saw!—well, then perhaps you now know more about it all than I do, sir! But I'm only vexing you... Here's the thing, sir: I came here three weeks ago, on my own business... I am Pavel Pavlovich Trusotsky, you recognized me yourself, sir. My business is that I'm soliciting to be transferred to another province and to another job, sir, to a post with a considerable promotion... But, anyhow, all that is also not it, sir!... The main thing, if you wish, is that it's the third week I've been hanging around here, and it seems I've been putting my business off on purpose—that is, about the transfer, sir—and, really, even if it does come off, for all I know I may forget that it came off, sir, and not move out of your Petersburg in the mood I'm in. I'm hanging around as if I'd lost my purpose, and as if I were even glad I'd lost it—in the mood I'm in, sir..."

"What mood is that?" Velchaninov was frowning.

The visitor raised his eyes to him, raised his hat, and now with firm dignity pointed to the crape.

"Yes—here's what mood, sir!"

Velchaninov gazed dumbly now at the crape, now into his visitor's face. Suddenly a blush poured instantly over his cheeks, and he became terribly agitated.

"Not Natalia Vassilievna!"

"Herself, sir. Natalia Vassilievna! This past March... Consumption, and almost suddenly, sir, in some two or three months! And I've been left—as you see!"

Having said this, the visitor, with strong emotion, spread his arms to both sides, holding his hat with the crape in his left hand and bowing his bald head very deeply for at least ten seconds.

This look and this gesture suddenly as if refreshed Velchaninov; a mocking and even provocative smile flitted over his lips—but as yet only for a moment: the news of the death of this lady (with whom he had been acquainted so long ago and whom he had so long ago managed to forget)—now made an unexpectedly staggering impression on him.

"How can it be!" he muttered the first words that came to his lips. "And why didn't you come straight to tell me?"

"I thank you for your sympathy, I see and appreciate it, despite..."

"Despite?"

"Despite so many years of separation, you have now treated my grief and even myself with such perfect sympathy that I naturally feel grateful. That is the only thing I wished to say, sir. And it is not that I doubted my friends, even now I can find the most sincere friends here, sir (take just Stepan Mikhailovich Bagautov alone), but my acquaintance with you, Alexei Ivanovich (friendship, perhaps—for I recall it with gratitude)—was nine years ago, sir, you never came back to us; there were no letters on either side..."

The visitor was reciting as if by rote, but all the while he spoke, he looked at the ground, though, of course, he could see everything above as well. But the host, too, had managed to collect himself a little.

With a certain quite strange impression, which was growing more and more, he listened to and observed Pavel Pavlovich, and suddenly, when the man paused—the most motley and unexpected thoughts unexpectedly flooded his head.

"But why did I keep not recognizing you till now?" he cried out, becoming animated. "We ran into each other some five times in the street!"

"Yes, I also remember that; you kept coming toward me, sir—twice, maybe even three times..."

"That is—it was *you* who *kept* coming toward me, not I toward you!"

Velchaninov got up and suddenly laughed loudly and quite unexpectedly. Pavel Pavlovich paused, looked attentively, but at once began to go on:

"And you didn't recognize me because, first of all, you might have forgotten, sir, and, finally, I even had smallpox during this time, which left some traces on my face."

"Smallpox? Why, he did in fact have smallpox! but how on earth did you..."

"Manage that? All sorts of things happen, Alexei Ivanovich; every now and then one manages!"

"Only it's terribly funny all the same. Well, go on, go on—my dear friend!"

"And I, though I also kept meeting you, sir..."

"Wait! Why did you just say 'manage that'? I was going to put it much more politely. Well, go on, go on!"

For some reason he was feeling merrier and merrier. The staggering impression was replaced by something quite different.

He paced up and down the room with quick steps.

"And I, though I also kept meeting you, sir, and as I was coming here to Petersburg I was even intending to look you up without fail, but, I repeat, I'm now in such a state of mind... and so mentally broken since that same month of March..."

"Ah, yes! broken since the month of March... Wait, you don't smoke?"

"You know, I, while Natalia Vassilievna..."

"Ah, yes, yes; but since the month of March?"

"Maybe a little cigarette."

"Here's a cigarette; light up and—go on! go on, I'm terribly..."

And, lighting a cigar, Velchaninov quickly sat down on his bed again. Pavel Pavlovich paused.

"But you yourself, however, are somehow quite agitated—are you well, sir?"

"Ah, to the devil with my health!" Velchaninov suddenly got angry. "Go on!"

The visitor, for his part, seeing the host's agitation, was growing more pleased and self-confident.

"What's the point of going on, sir?" he began again. "Imagine to yourself, Alexei Ivanovich, first of all, a man who is crushed—that is, not simply but, so to speak, radically crushed; a man who, after twenty years of marriage, changes his life and hangs about in dusty streets without any suitable purpose, as if in the steppes, all but forgetting himself, and even reveling somewhat in this self-forgetting. After that it's natural if sometimes, meeting an acquaintance or even a true friend, I may avoid him on purpose, so as not to approach him at such a moment—of self-forgetting, that is. And at another moment, one remembers everything so well and thirsts so much to see at least some witness and partaker of that recent but irretrievable past, and one's heart starts pounding so, that not only in the daytime but even at night one risks throwing oneself into a friend's arms, even if one has to wake him up especially for that purpose past three in the morning, sir. I only got the hour wrong, but not the friendship; for at the present moment I'm only too well rewarded, sir. And concerning the hour, really, I thought it wasn't twelve yet, being in that mood. One drinks one's own sorrow and is as if intoxicated by it. And not even sorrow, but precisely this *novi-condition* is what keeps hitting me..."

"What a way to put it, though!" Velchaninov, having suddenly become terribly serious again, observed somehow gloomily.

"Yes, sir, I put it strangely..."

"And you're... not joking?"

"Joking!" exclaimed Pavel Pavlovich in mournful perplexity, "at the very moment when I announce..."

"Ah, keep quiet about that, I beg you!"

Velchaninov got up and again began pacing the room.

And in this way about five minutes went by. The visitor, too, made as if to get up, but Velchaninov cried out: "Sit, sit!"—and the man at once obediently lowered himself into the armchair.

"How changed you are, though!" Velchaninov began talking again, suddenly stopping in front of him—just as if suddenly struck by the thought. "Terribly changed! Extremely! Quite a different man!"

"No wonder, sir: it's nine years."

"No, no, no, it's not a matter of years! You haven't changed in appearance, God knows: you've changed in something else!"

"Also, maybe, these nine years, sir."

"Or since the month of March!"

"Heh, heh," Pavel Pavlovich chuckled slyly, "you've got some playful thought... But, if I dare ask—what essentially is this change?"

"What indeed! Before there was such a solid and decent Pavel Pavlovich, such a smarty of a Pavel Pavlovich, and now—a perfect *vaurien*² of a Pavel Pavlovich."

He was in that degree of vexation in which the most restrained people sometimes start saying unnecessary things.

"*Vaurien*! You think so? And no longer a 'smarty'? Not a smarty?" Pavel Pavlovich tittered delightedly.

"The devil you're a 'smarty'! Now, maybe, you're thoroughly *smart*."

"I'm impudent," Velchaninov went on thinking, "but this rascal is more impudent still. And... and what's his purpose?"

"Ah, my dearest, ah, my most priceless Alexei Ivanovich!" The visitor suddenly became extremely agitated and started fidgeting in his armchair. "But what's that to us? We're not in society now, not in brilliant, high-society company! We're—two most sincere and ancient former friends, and, so to speak, have come together in the fullest sincerity to mutually recall that precious connection, in which the deceased woman constituted so precious a link in our friendship!"

And he was as if so carried away by the rapture of his feelings that he again bowed his head, as earlier, but now he covered his face with his hat. Velchaninov studied him with loathing and uneasiness.

"And what if he's simply a buffoon?" flashed in his head. "But n-no, n-no! it seems he's not drunk—however, maybe he is; his face is red. Though even if he is drunk—it comes out the same. What has he got up his sleeve? What does the rascal want?"

"Remember, remember," Pavel Pavlovich cried out, uncovering his face little by little and as if getting more and more carried away by his memories, "remember our excursions outside of town, our evenings and evening parties with dances and innocent games at His Excellency the most hospitable Semyon Semyonovich's? And our evening readings, just the three of us? And our first acquaintance with you, when you came to me one morning to get information about your lawsuit, and even started shouting, sir, and suddenly Natalia Vassilievna came out and ten minutes later you were already a true friend of our house, for precisely one whole year, sir—just as in *The Provincial Lady*, Mr. Turgenev's play..."³

Velchaninov was pacing slowly, looking at the ground, listening with impatience and loathing, but—listening hard.

"*The Provincial Lady* never entered my head," he interrupted, somewhat at a loss, "and you never spoke in such a squeaky voice before, or in this... not your own style. Why are you doing it?"

"Indeed, I was mostly silent before, sir—that is, I was more silent," Pavel Pavlovich picked up hastily. "You know, before I preferred to listen when my late wife spoke. You remember how she spoke, with what wit, sir... And concerning *The Provincial Lady* and in particular concerning *Stupendiev*—you're right there, too, because it was later that we ourselves, I and my priceless late wife, remembering you, sir, in some quiet moments, after you'd already left, compared our first meeting to this theater piece... because there was in fact a resemblance, sir. And particularly concerning *Stupendiev*..."

"What's this *Stupendiev*, devil take it!" Velchaninov shouted and even stamped his foot, being completely put out at the word *Stupendiev*, owing to a certain uneasy remembrance that flashed in him at this word.

"*Stupendiev* is a role, sir, a theatrical role, the role of 'the husband' in the play *The Provincial Lady*," Pavel Pavlovich squeaked in the sweetest little voice, "but that belongs to another category of our dear and beautiful memories, already after your departure, when Stepan Mikhailovich Bagautov graced us with his friendship, just as you did, sir, and for a whole five years."

"Bagautov? What's that? Which Bagautov?" Velchaninov suddenly stopped dead in his tracks.

"Bagautov, Stepan Mikhailovich, who graced us with his friendship precisely a year after you and... like you, sir."

"Ah, my God, but that I know!" Velchaninov cried, finally figuring it out. "Bagautov! but he served with you..."

"He did, he did! at the governor's! From Petersburg, a most elegant young man of the highest society!" Pavel Pavlovich cried out, decidedly enraptured.

"Yes, yes, yes! How could I! And so he, too..."

"And he, too! And he, too!" Pavel Pavlovich, having picked up his host's imprudent phrase, echoed with the same rapture. "And he, too! It was then that we produced *The Provincial Lady* in His Excellency the most hospitable Semyon Semyonovich's home theater—Stepan Mikhailovich was 'the count,' I was 'the husband,' and my late wife was 'the provincial lady'—only the role of 'the husband,' was taken from me at the insistence of my late wife, so I didn't play 'the husband,' being supposedly unable to, sir..."

"No, the devil you're Stupendiev! You're Pavel Pavlovich Trusotsky first of all, and not Stupendiev!" Velchaninov said rudely, unceremoniously, and all but trembling with vexation. "Only, excuse me, this Bagautov is here in Petersburg; I saw him myself, in the spring! Why don't you go to him, too?"

"I've called on him every blessed day for three weeks now, sir. He won't receive me! He's ill, he can't receive me! And, imagine, I found out from the foremost sources that he really is extremely dangerously ill! Such a friend for six years! Ah, Alexei Ivanovich, I'm telling you and I repeat that in this mood one sometimes wishes simply to fall through the earth, even in reality, sir; and at other moments it seems I could just up and embrace precisely some one of these former, so to speak, witnesses and partakers, and with the sole purpose of weeping—that is, absolutely for no other purpose than weeping!..."

"Well, anyhow, you've had enough for today, right?" Velchaninov said sharply.

"More, more than enough!" Pavel Pavlovich rose at once from his place. "It's four o'clock and, above all, I've disturbed you so egoistically..."

"Listen, now: I'll call on you myself, without fail, and then I do hope... Tell me directly, frankly tell me: you're not drunk today?"

"Drunk? Not a whit..."

"You didn't drink before coming, or earlier?"

"You know, Alexei Ivanovich, you're completely feverish, sir."

"I'll call on you by tomorrow, in the morning, before one..."

"And I've long been noticing that you're as if delirious, sir." Pavel Pavlovich interfered delightedly, pressing the point. "I really am so ashamed that I, in my awkwardness... but I'm leaving, I'm leaving! And you go to bed and sleep!"

"And why didn't you tell me where you live?" Velchaninov, recollecting himself, shouted after him.

"Didn't I, sir? In the Pokrovsky Hotel..."

"What Pokrovsky Hotel?"

"Why, right next to the Pokrov church, there in the lane, sir—only I forget which lane, and the number as well, but it's right next to the Pokrov church..."

"I'll find it!"

"You'll be a most welcome guest."

He was already going out to the stairs.

"Wait!" Velchaninov cried again, "you're not going to give me the slip?"

"How do you mean, 'give you the slip'?" Pavel Pavlovich goggled his eyes at him, turning and smiling from the third step.

Instead of an answer, Velchaninov noisily slammed the door, locked it carefully, and put the hook into the eye. Going back to his room, he spat as if he had been befouled by something.

After standing motionlessly for five minutes in the middle of the room, he threw himself down on the bed, without undressing at all, and instantly fell asleep. The forgotten candle burned all the way down on the table.

IV WIFE, HUSBAND, AND LOVER

He slept very soundly and woke up at exactly half past nine; rose instantly, sat on his bed, and at once began thinking about the death of "that woman."

Yesterday's staggering impression from the unexpected news of this death had left him in some bewilderment and even pain. This bewilderment and pain had only been stifled in him for a time yesterday, in Pavel Pavlovich's presence, by one strange idea. But now, on awakening, all that had happened nine years earlier suddenly stood before him with extreme vividness.

He had loved and been the lover of this woman, the late Natalia Vassilievna, the wife of "this Trusotsky," when, on his own business (and also on the occasion of a lawsuit about an inheritance), he had spent a whole year in T——, though the business itself had not called for such long-term presence; the real reason had been this liaison. This liaison and love had possessed him so strongly that he had been as if the slave of Natalia Vassilievna and, indeed, would have ventured at once upon anything even of the most monstrous and senseless sort if it had been demanded only by the merest caprice of this woman. Never, either before or afterward, had anything similar happened to him. At the end of the year, when parting was already imminent, Velchaninov had been in such despair as the fatal hour drew near—in despair, despite the fact that the parting was supposed to be for the shortest time—that he suggested to Natalia Vassilievna that he carry her off, take her away from her husband, drop everything, and go abroad with him forever. Only the mockery and firm persistence of this lady (who at first fully approved of the project, but probably only out of boredom or else to make fun of it) could have stopped him and forced him to leave alone. And what then? Two months had not passed since their parting, and he, in Petersburg, was already asking himself that question which remained forever unresolved for him: did he really love this woman, or had it all been only a certain "bedevilment"? And it was not at all out of light-mindedness or under the influence of a new passion starting in him that the question was born in him: for those first two months in

Petersburg he was in some sort of frenzy and was unlikely to notice any woman, though he at once took up with his former society and had occasion to see hundreds of women. Nevertheless, he knew very well that if he found himself at once back in T——, he would immediately fall again under all the oppressive charm of this woman, despite all the questions that had been born in him. Even five years later he was still of the same conviction. But five years later he had already admitted it to himself with indignation and even remembered “that woman” herself with hatred. He was ashamed of his T——-year; he could not understand how such a “stupid” passion had even been possible for him, Velchaninov! All memories of this passion turned to disgrace for him; he blushed to the point of tears and suffered remorse. True, after another few years, he managed to calm himself down somewhat; he tried to forget it all—and nearly succeeded. And now all at once, nine years later, it all suddenly and strangely rose up again before him after yesterday’s news about Natalia Vassilievna’s death.

Now, sitting on his bed, with vague thoughts crowding disorderedly in his head, he felt and realized clearly only one thing—that despite all yesterday’s “staggering impression” from this news, he was all the same very calm regarding the fact of her death. “Am I not even going to feel sorry about her?” he asked himself. True, he no longer felt hatred for her now and could judge more impartially, more justly about her. In his opinion, which, by the way, had been formed early on in this nine-year period of separation, Natalia Vassilievna belonged to the number of the most ordinary provincial ladies of “good” provincial society, and—“who knows, maybe that’s how it was, and only I alone made up such a fantasy out of her?” He had always suspected, however, that this opinion might contain an error; he felt it now, too. Besides, the facts contradicted it; this Bagautov had also had a liaison with her for several years, and, it seems, was also “under all her charms.” Bagautov was indeed a young man of the best Petersburg society and, being “a most empty man” (as Velchaninov said of him), could therefore make his career only in Petersburg. Now he had, nevertheless, neglected Petersburg—that is, his chiefest profit—and lost five years in T——solely on account of this woman! And he had finally returned to Petersburg, perhaps, only because he, too, had been discarded like “a worn-out old shoe.” So there was something extraordinary in this woman—a gift of attraction, enslavement, domination!

And yet it would seem that she had no means of attracting and enslaving: “she wasn’t even so beautiful, and perhaps simply wasn’t beautiful at all.” Velchaninov had met her when she was already twenty-eight years old. Her not very handsome face was able sometimes to be pleasantly animated; but her eyes were not nice: there was some unnecessary hardness in her look. She was very thin. Her intellectual education was weak; her intelligence was unquestionable and penetrating, but nearly always one-sided. The manners of a provincial society lady, but, true, one with considerable tact; elegant taste, but mainly just in knowing how to dress herself. A resolute and domineering character; there could be no halfway compromise with her in anything: “either all, or nothing.” A surprising firmness and steadfastness in difficult matters. A gift of magnanimity and nearly always right beside it—a boundless unfairness. It was impossible to argue with this lady: two times two never meant anything to her. She never considered herself unfair or guilty in anything. Her constant and countless betrayals of her husband did not weigh on her conscience in the least. In Velchaninov’s own comparison, she was like “a flagellant’s Mother of God,”⁴ who believes in the highest degree that she is indeed the Mother of God—so did Natalia Vassilievna believe in the highest degree in each of her actions. She was faithful to her lovers—though only until she got tired of them. She liked to torment a lover, but also liked to reward him. She was of a passionate, cruel, and sensual type. She hated depravity, condemned it with unbelievable violence, and—was depraved herself. No facts could ever have brought her to an awareness of her own depravity. “Doubtless she *sincerely* doesn’t know it,” Velchaninov had thought to himself still in T——. (While participating in her depravity himself, be it noted in passing.) “She’s one of those women,” he thought, “who are as if born to be unfaithful wives. These women never fall before marriage: the law of their nature is that they must be married first. The husband is the first lover, but not otherwise than after the altar. No one marries with more ease and adroitness. For the first lover, the husband is always to blame. And everything happens with the highest degree of sincerity; to the end they feel themselves justified in the highest degree and, of course, perfectly innocent.”

Velchaninov was convinced that there indeed existed such a type of such women; but then, too, he was convinced that there existed a corresponding type of husband, whose sole purpose consisted of nothing but corresponding to this type of woman. In his opinion, the essence of such husbands lay in their being, so to speak, “eternal husbands,” or, better to say, in being *only* husbands in life and nothing else. “Such a man is born and develops solely in order to get married, and having married, to turn immediately into an appendage of his wife, even if it so happens that he happens to have his own indisputable character. The main feature of such a husband is—a well-known adornment. It is as impossible for him not to wear horns as it is for the sun not to shine; but he not only never knows it, but even can never find it out by the very laws of nature.” Velchaninov deeply believed that these two types existed and that Pavel Pavlovich Trusotsky of T—— was a perfect representative of one of them. Yesterday’s Pavel Pavlovich, naturally, was not the Pavel Pavlovich he had known in T——. He found the man incredibly changed, but Velchaninov also knew that he could not but have changed and that all this was perfectly natural; Mr. Trusotsky could be all he had been before only with his wife alive, but now this was only part of the whole, suddenly set free—that is, something astonishing and unlike anything else.

As for the Pavel Pavlovich of T——, this is what Velchaninov remembered and recalled about him now:

“Of course, in T——Pavel Pavlovich was only a husband” and nothing more. If, for instance, he was, on top of that, also an official, it was solely because for him the service, too, had turned, so to speak, into one of the duties of his married life; he served for the sake of his wife and her social position in T——, though he was in himself quite a zealous official. He was thirty-five years old then and possessed a certain fortune, even a not altogether small one. He did not show any particular ability in the service, nor inability either. He kept company with all that was highest in the province and was reputed to be on an excellent footing. Natalia Vassilievna was perfectly respected in T——; she, however, did not value that very much, accepting it as her due, but at home she always knew how to receive superbly, having trained Pavel Pavlovich as well that his manners were ennobled enough even for receiving the highest provincial authorities. Maybe (so it seemed to Velchaninov) he was also intelligent: but since Natalia Vassilievna rather disliked it when her spouse did much talking, his intelligence went largely unnoticed. Maybe he had many good innate qualities, as well as bad ones. But the good qualities were as if under wraps, and the bad impulses were stifled almost definitively.

Velchaninov remembered, for instance, that there occasionally arose in Mr. Trusotsky an impulse to mock his neighbor; but this was strictly forbidden him. He also liked occasionally to tell some story; but this, too, was supervised: he was allowed to tell only something of the more insignificant and short variety. He had an inclination for friendly circles away from home and even—for having a drink with a friend; but this last was even exterminated at the root. And with this feature: that, looking from outside, no one could tell that he was a husband under the heel; Natalia Vassilievna seemed to be a perfectly obedient wife and was perhaps even convinced of it herself. It might have been that Pavel Pavlovich loved Natalia Vassilievna to distraction; but no one was able to notice it, and it was even impossible—also probably following the domestic orders of Natalia Vassilievna herself. Several times during his T——life, Velchaninov asked himself: does this husband have at least some suspicion that he is having a liaison with his wife? Several times he seriously asked Natalia Vassilievna about it and always received the response, uttered with some vexation, that her husband knew nothing and could never learn anything, and that “whatever there is—is none of his business.” Another feature on her part: she never laughed at Pavel Pavlovich, and found him neither ridiculous nor very bad in anything, and would even intercede for him very much if anyone dared to show him any sort of discourtesy. Having no children, she naturally had to become predominantly a society woman; but her own home was necessary for her as well. Society pleasures never fully ruled her, and at home she liked very much to occupy herself with the household and handwork. Pavel Pavlovich had recalled yesterday their family readings in T——of an evening; this did happen: Velchaninov read, Pavel Pavlovich also read, to Velchaninov’s surprise, he was very good at reading aloud. Natalia Vassilievna meanwhile would do embroidery and always listened to the reading quietly and equably. They read novels by Dickens, something from Russian magazines, and sometimes also something “serious.” Natalia Vassilievna highly esteemed Velchaninov’s cultivation, but silently, as something finished and decided, which there was no more point in talking about; generally her attitude to everything bookish and learned was indifferent, as to something completely alien, though perhaps useful; but Pavel Pavlovich’s sometimes showed a certain ardor.

The T——liaison broke off suddenly, having reached on Velchaninov’s part the fullest brim and even almost madness. He was simply and suddenly chased away, though everything was arranged in such fashion that he left perfectly ignorant of the fact that he had already been discarded “like a useless old shoe.” About a month and a half before his departure, there appeared in T——a certain little artillery officer, a very young man, just graduated from cadet school, who took to visiting the Trusotskys; instead of three, there came to be four. Natalia Vassilievna received the boy benevolently, but treated him as a boy. Velchaninov had decidedly no inkling of anything, nor could he have thought anything then, because he had suddenly been informed of the necessity of parting. One of the hundred reasons put forth by Natalia Vassilievna for his unfailing and most speedy departure was that she thought she was pregnant; and so it was natural that he had unfailingly and at once to disappear for at least three or four months, so that nine months later it would be more difficult for the husband to suspect anything, if any calumny should come up afterward. The argument was rather farfetched. After Velchaninov’s stormy proposal of running away to Paris or America, he left alone for Petersburg, “no doubt just for a brief moment”—that is, for no more than three months, otherwise he would not have left for anything, despite any reasons or arguments. Exactly two months later, in Petersburg, he received a letter from Natalia Vassilievna with a request that he not come back, because she already loved another; about her pregnancy she informed him that she had been mistaken. The information about the mistake was superfluous, everything was clear to him: he remembered the little officer. With that the matter ended forever. He heard something afterward, already several years later, about Bagautov turning up there and staying for a whole five years. Such an endless duration of the liaison he explained to himself, among other things, by the fact that Natalia Vassilievna must have aged a lot, and therefore would herself become more attached.

He stayed sitting on his bed for almost an hour; finally, he came to his senses, rang for Mavra with coffee, drank it hastily, got dressed, and at precisely eleven o’clock went to the Pokrov church to look for the Pokrovsky Hotel. Concerning the Pokrovsky Hotel proper he had now formed a special morning impression. Incidentally, he was even somewhat ashamed of his treatment of Pavel Pavlovich yesterday, and this now had to be resolved.

The whole phantasmagoria yesterday with the door latch he explained by an accident, by the drunken state of Pavel Pavlovich, and perhaps by something else as well, but essentially he had no precise idea why he was going now to start some new relationship with the former husband, when everything between them had ended so naturally and of itself. He was drawn by something; there was some special impression here, and as a result of this impression he was drawn ...

V LIZA

Pavel Pavlovich had no thought of “giving him the slip,” and God knows why Velchaninov had asked him that question yesterday; veritably, he himself had had a darkening. At his first inquiry in the grocery shop near the Pokrov church, he was directed to the Pokrovsky Hotel, two steps away in a lane. At the hotel it was explained to him that Mr. Trusotsky was now “putting up” there in the yard, in the wing, in Marya Sysoevna’s furnished rooms. Going up the narrow, slopped, and very filthy stone stairway of the wing to the second floor, where those rooms were, he suddenly heard weeping. It was as if a child of seven or eight were weeping; it was heavy weeping, stifled sobs could be heard bursting through, accompanied by a stamping of feet and also as if stifled but violent shouts in some hoarse falsetto, but now of a grown man. This grown man seemed to be quieting the child and wishing very much for the weeping not to be heard, but was making more noise himself. The shouts were merciless, and the child was as if begging forgiveness. Entering a small corridor with two doors on each side of it, Velchaninov met a very fat and tall woman, disheveled in a homey way, and asked her about Pavel Pavlovich. She jabbed her finger toward the door behind which the weeping could be heard. The fat and purple face of the forty-year-old woman expressed some indignation.

“See what fun he has!” she batted in a half voice and went past him to the stairs. Velchaninov was about to knock, but changed his mind and simply opened Pavel Pavlovich’s door. In the middle of a small room, crudely but abundantly

furnished with simple painted furniture, Pavel Pavlovich stood, dressed only by half, without frock coat or waistcoat, his face flushed with vexation, trying to quiet with shouts, gestures, and perhaps (as it seemed to Velchaninov) also kicks, a little girl of about eight, dressed poorly, though like a young lady, in a short black woolen dress. She, it seemed, was in genuine hysterics, hysterically sobbing and reaching out her arms to Pavel Pavlovich, as if wishing to put them around him, to embrace him, to plead and entreat something from him. In an instant everything changed: seeing the visitor, the girl gave a cry and shot into the tiny adjoining room, while Pavel Pavlovich, momentarily taken aback, melted all at once into a smile, exactly as yesterday, when Velchaninov had suddenly opened the door to the stairs.

"Alexei Ivanovich!" he exclaimed in decided surprise. "In no way could I have expected... but come, come! Here, on this sofa, or this armchair, while I..." And he rushed to get into his frock coat, forgetting to put his waistcoat on.

"Don't be ceremonious, stay as you are." Velchaninov sat down on a chair.

"No, allow me to be ceremonious, sir; there, now I'm a bit more decent. But why are you sitting in the corner? Here, in the armchair, by the table... Well, I never, never expected!"

He, too, sat down on the edge of a wicker chair, though not next to the "unexpected" visitor, but turning his chair at an angle so as to face Velchaninov more fully.

"And why didn't you expect me? Didn't I precisely arrange yesterday that I'd come to you at this time?"

"I thought you wouldn't come, sir; and once I realized the whole thing yesterday, on waking up, I decidedly despaired of seeing you, even forever, sir."

Velchaninov meanwhile was looking around. The room was in disorder, the bed was not made, clothes were strewn about, on the table were glasses with drunk coffee, bread crumbs, and a bottle of champagne, half-finished, uncorked, with a glass beside it. He looked out of the corner of his eye into the adjoining room, but all was quiet there; the girl kept silent and did not stir.

"You don't mean you're drinking this now?" Velchaninov pointed to the champagne.

"Leftovers, sir..." Pavel Pavlovich was embarrassed.

"Well, you really have changed!"

"Bad habits, and suddenly, sir. Really, since that time; I'm not lying, sir! I can't restrain myself. Don't worry now, Alexei Ivanovich, I'm not drunk now and won't pour out drivel, like yesterday at your place, sir, but I'm telling you the truth, it's all since that time, sir! And if someone had told me half a year ago that I'd get so loose as I am now, sir, had showed me myself in a mirror—I wouldn't have believed it!"

"So you were drunk yesterday?"

"I was, sir," Pavel Pavlovich admitted in a half whisper, lowering his eyes abashedly, "and you see, not so much drunk as somewhat past it, sir. I wish to explain this, because past it is worse for me, sir: there's not much drunkenness, but some sort of cruelty and recklessness remain, and I feel grief more strongly. Maybe I drink for the sake of grief, sir. And then I may pull some pranks, even quite stupidly, sir, and get at people with insults. I must have presented myself to you very strangely yesterday?"

"You don't remember?"

"How not remember, I remember everything, sir..."

"You see, Pavel Pavlovich, I thought it over and explained it to myself in exactly the same way," Velchaninov said conciliatorily, "and besides, I was somewhat irritable myself yesterday and... overly impatient with you, which I freely admit. Sometimes I don't feel myself quite well, and your unexpected arrival in the night..."

"Yes, in the night, in the night!" Pavel Pavlovich shook his head as if surprised and disapproving. "And what on earth prompted me! I wouldn't have come in for anything if you yourself hadn't opened the door, sir; I'd have gone away. I came to you about a week ago, Alexei Ivanovich, and didn't find you at home, but afterward I might never have come another time, sir. All the same, I also have a touch of pride, Alexei Ivanovich, though I'm aware that I'm in... such a state. We met in the street, too, but I kept thinking: well, and what if he doesn't recognize me, what if he turns away, nine years are no joke—so I didn't dare approach. And yesterday I came trudging from the Petersburg side, and forgot the time, sir. All on account of this" (he pointed to the bottle) "and from emotion, sir. Stupid! very, sir! and if it was a man not like you—because you did come to me even after yesterday, remembering old times—I'd even have lost hope of renewing the acquaintance."

Velchaninov listened attentively. The man seemed to be speaking sincerely and even with a certain dignity; and yet he had not believed a thing from the very moment he set foot in the place.

"Tell me, Pavel Pavlovich, you're not alone here, then? Whose girl is it that I just found with you?"

Pavel Pavlovich was even surprised and raised his eyebrows, but the look he gave Velchaninov was bright and pleasant.

"Whose girl, you ask? But that's Liza!" he said with an affable smile.

"What Liza?" Velchaninov murmured, and something as if shook in him. The impression was too unexpected. Earlier, when he came in and saw Liza, he was surprised, but felt decidedly no presentiment, no special thought in himself.

"Why, our Liza, our daughter Liza!" Pavel Pavlovich went on smiling.

"How, daughter? You mean you and Natalia... and the late Natalia Vassilievna had children?" Velchaninov asked mistrustfully and timidly, somehow in a very soft voice.

"But, how's that, sir? Ah, my God, but who indeed could you have learned it from? What's the matter with me! It was after you that God granted us!"

Pavel Pavlovich even jumped up from his chair in some excitement, also as if pleasant, however.

"I never heard a thing," Velchaninov said and—paled.

"Indeed, indeed, who could you have learned it from, sir!" Pavel Pavlovich repeated in a tenderly slack voice. "We had lost all hope, my late wife and I, you remember it yourself, and suddenly God blessed us, and what came over me then—he alone knows that! exactly a year after you, it seems, or not, not a year after, much less, wait, sir: you left us then, unless memory deceives me, in October or even November?"

"I left T——at the beginning of September, on the twelfth of September; I remember it well..."

"In September was it? hm... what's the matter with me?" Pavel Pavlovich was very surprised. "Well, if so, then permit me: you left on the twelfth of September, and Liza was born on the eighth of May, so that makes it September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April—after eight months and something, there, sir! and if only you knew how my late wife..."

"But show me... call her..." Velchaninov babbled in some sort of breaking voice.

"Certainly, sir!" Pavel Pavlovich bustled, interrupting at once what he had intended to say, as altogether unnecessary. "Right away, I'll introduce her to you right away, sir!" and he hurriedly went to Liza's room.

Perhaps a whole three or four minutes went by; there was quick and rapid whispering in the little room, and the sounds of Liza's voice were faintly heard. "She's begging not to be brought out," Velchaninov thought. They finally came out.

"Here, sir, she's all embarrassed," Pavel Pavlovich said, "she's so bashful, so proud, sir... just like her late mother!"

Liza came out without tears now, her eyes lowered, her father leading her by the hand. She was a tall, slim, and very pretty little girl. She quickly raised her large blue eyes to the guest, looked at him with curiosity, but sullenly, and at once lowered her eyes again. There was in her gaze that child's seriousness, as when children, left alone with a stranger, go into a corner and from there keep glancing, seriously and mistrustfully, at the new, first-time visitor; but perhaps there was also another thought, as if no longer a child's—so it seemed to Velchaninov. Her father brought her over to him.

"This nice man used to know Mama, he was our friend, don't be shy, give him your hand."

The girl bowed slightly and timidly offered her hand.

"Natalia Vassilievna wanted not to teach her to curtsy in greeting but simply to bow slightly in the English manner and offer her hand to a guest," he added in explanation to Velchaninov, studying him intently.

Velchaninov knew he was studying him, but he no longer cared at all about concealing his excitement; he was sitting motionlessly on the chair, holding Liza's hand in his, and gazing intently at the child. But Liza was very preoccupied with something and, forgetting her hand in the visitor's hand, would not take her eyes off her father. She listened timorously to everything he said. Velchaninov recognized those large blue eyes at once, but most of all he was struck by the astonishing, remarkably tender whiteness of her face and the color of her hair; these signs were all too significant for him. The shape of the face and the curve of the lips, on the other hand, distinctly resembled Natalia Vassilievna. Pavel Pavlovich meanwhile had long since begun telling something, with extraordinary ardor and feeling, it seemed, but Velchaninov did not hear him at all. He caught only one last phrase:

"... so that you cannot even imagine, Alexei Ivanovich, our joy in this gift of the Lord, sir! For me her appearance constituted everything, so that even if by the will of God my quiet happiness should disappear—then, I thought, Liza would be left to me; that at least I knew firmly, sir!"

"And Natalia Vassilievna?" asked Velchaninov.

"Natalia Vassilievna?" Pavel Pavlovich's face twisted. "You know her, remember, sir, she didn't like to say much, but when she was bidding farewell to her on her deathbed... it all got said there, sir! And I just said to you 'on her deathbed'; and yet suddenly, the day before she died, she got excited, angry—said they wanted to finish her off with medications, that she just had a simple fever, and that both our doctors knew nothing, and that as soon as Koch (remember, our staff physician, a little old man) came back, she'd be out of bed in two weeks! Not only that, just five hours before passing away, she remembered that we had to be sure and visit her aunt in three weeks, for her name day, on her estate, Liza's godmother, sir..."

Velchaninov suddenly got up from his chair, still without letting go of Liza's hand. It seemed to him, incidentally, that in the burning glance the girl directed at her father there was something reproachful.

"She's not sick?" he asked somehow strangely, hurriedly.

"Seems not, sir, but... our circumstances here came together this way," Pavel Pavlovich said with rueful concern. "She's a strange child to begin with, a nervous one, after her mother's death she was sick for two weeks, with hysterics, sir. Just now we've had such weeping, as you came in, sir—do you hear, Liza, do you?—and over what? The whole thing is that I go away and leave her, so it means I no longer love her anymore as I loved her when Mama was alive—that's what she accuses me of. Why should such a fantasy enter the head of a child, sir, who ought to be playing with toys? But there's no one here for her to play with."

"And how is it you're... it's really just the two of you here?"

"Quite alone, sir; only a maid comes once a day to straighten up."

"And when you go out, she stays alone like that?"

"And what else, sir? And yesterday as I went out I even locked her in that little room, it's because of that that we're having tears today. But what was there to do, judge for yourself: two days ago she went downstairs without me, and a boy threw a stone at her head. Or else she'll burst into tears and rush around to everyone in the yard asking where I went, and that's not good, sir. And I'm a fine one, too: I leave her for an hour, and come back the next morning—that's how it turned out yesterday. It's a good thing the landlady let her out while I was gone, she called a locksmith to open the lock—it's even a disgrace, sir—I feel myself a veritable monster, sir. It's all from darkening..."

"Papa!" the girl said timidly and anxiously.

"What, again! you're at it again! what did I just tell you?"

"I won't, I won't," Liza repeated in fear, hurriedly clasping her hands before him.

"It can't go on with you like this, in such circumstances," Velchaninov suddenly spoke impatiently, with the voice of one in authority. "You... you are a man of means; how can you live like that—first of all, in this wing, and in such circumstances?"

"In this wing, sir? But we may leave in a week, and we've spent a lot of money as it is, means or no means, sir..."

"Well, enough, enough," Velchaninov interrupted him with ever-increasing impatience, as if clearly saying: "No point in talking, I know everything you're going to say, and I know with what intention you're saying it!"

"Listen, I'll make you an offer: you just said you'd stay for perhaps a week, maybe two. I have a house here—that is, a certain family—where I'm as if in my own home, for twenty years now. The family of one Pogoreltsev. Pogoreltsev,

Alexei Pavlovich, a privy councillor; he might even be helpful to you in your case. They are at their country house now. They have their own quite splendid country house. Klavdia Petrovna Pogoreltsev is like a sister to me, like a mother. They have eight children. Let me take Liza there right now... so as not to lose any time. They'll receive her gladly, for the whole time, they'll be good to her, like their own daughter, their own daughter!"

He was terribly impatient and did not conceal it.

"That's somehow impossible, sir," Pavel Pavlovich said with a little grimace and, as it seemed to Velchaninov, peeking slyly into his eyes.

"Why? Why impossible?"

"But how, sir, let the child go like that, and suddenly, sir—even supposing it's with such a sincere well-wisher as yourself, I don't mean that, sir, but all the same to a strange house, and of such high society, sir, where I still don't know how she'll be received."

"But I told you I'm like one of them," Velchaninov cried out almost in wrath. "Klavdia Petrovna will consider it a happiness just at one word from me. Like my daughter... but, devil take it, you know yourself you're just babbling... what's there to talk about!"

He even stamped his foot.

"I mean, won't it be very strange, sir? After all, I, too, would have to go and see her once or twice, she can't be entirely without a father, sir? heh, heh... and in such an important house, sir."

"But it's the simplest house, not at all an 'important' one!" Velchaninov shouted. "I'm telling you, there are lots of children there. She'll resurrect there, that's the whole purpose... And I'll introduce you there tomorrow if you like. And you certainly will have to go and thank them; we'll go every day if you wish..."

"Still, sir, it's somehow..."

"Nonsense! Above all, you know it yourself! Listen, why don't you come to me this evening and spend the night, perhaps, and early in the morning we'll go, so as to be there by noon."

"My benefactor! Even to spend the night with you..." Pavel Pavlovich suddenly consented with tender emotion, "a veritable benefactor... and where is their country house?"

"Their country house is in Lesnoye."

"Only what about her clothes, sir! Because to go to such a noble house, and in the country besides, you know... A father's heart, sir!"

"What's wrong with her clothes? She's in mourning. How can she have any other clothes? This is the most appropriate thing imaginable! Only maybe her linen could be cleaner, and the kerchief..." (The kerchief and what could be seen of her linen were indeed very dirty.)

"Right away, she absolutely must change," Pavel Pavlovich started bustling, "and the rest of the necessary linen we'll also collect right away; Marya Sysoevna took it for laundering, sir."

"Send for a carriage, then," Velchaninov interrupted, "and quickly, if possible."

But an obstacle arose; Liza was decidedly against it, she had been listening all the while in fear, and if, as he talked with Pavel Pavlovich, Velchaninov had managed to observe her well, he would have seen total despair on her little face.

"I won't go," she said firmly and softly.

"There, you see, just like her mama!"

"I'm not like Mama, I'm not like Mama!" Liza cried, wringing her little hands in despair, and as if justifying herself before her father's terrible reproach of being like her mama. "Papa, Papa, if you abandon me..."

She suddenly fell upon the frightened Velchaninov.

"If you take me, I'll..."

But she had no time to say anything more; Pavel Pavlovich grabbed her by the arm, almost by the scruff of the neck, and now with unconcealed animosity dragged her to the little room. There again followed several minutes of whispering; stifled weeping could be heard. Velchaninov was about to go in himself, when Pavel Pavlovich came out to him and with a twisted smile announced that she would presently come out, sir. Velchaninov tried not to look at him and averted his eyes.

Marya Sysoevna also came, the same woman he had met earlier on entering the corridor, and started packing into Liza's pretty little bag the linen she had brought for her.

"So, dearie, you're going to take the girl?" she addressed Velchaninov. "You've got a family or something? It'll be a good thing to do, dearie: she's a quiet child, you'll deliver her from this Sodom."⁵

"Now, now, Marya Sysoevna," Pavel Pavlovich began to mutter.

"What, Marya Sysoevna! Everybody knows my name. And isn't it a Sodom here? Is it fitting for a child who understands to look at such shame? They've brought a carriage for you, dearie—to Lesnoye, is it?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, good luck to you!"

Liza came out with a pale little face, her eyes downcast, and took her bag. Not one glance in Velchaninov's direction; she restrained herself and did not rush, as earlier, to embrace her father, even when saying good-bye; evidently she did not even want to look at him. Her father decorously kissed her on the head and patted it; at that her lips twisted and her chin trembled, but even so she did not raise her eyes to her father. Pavel Pavlovich looked somewhat pale, and his hands trembled—this Velchaninov noticed clearly, though he tried as hard as he could not to look at him. He wanted one thing: to leave quickly. "And, anyway, what fault is it of mine?" he thought. "It had to be this way." They went downstairs, there Marya Sysoevna kissed Liza, and only when she was already settled in the carriage did Liza raise her eyes to her father—and suddenly clasp her hands and cry out: another moment and she would have rushed to him from the carriage, but the horses had already started off.

THE NEW FANTASY OF AN IDLE MAN

"You're not feeling bad?" Velchaninov was frightened. "I'll order them to stop, to fetch water..."

She looked up at him with a burning, reproachful glance. "Where are you taking me?" she said sharply and curtly.

"It's a wonderful family, Liza. They're now living in a wonderful country house; there are many children, they'll love you there, they're kind... Don't be angry with me, Liza, I wish you well..."

He would have seemed strange at this moment to anyone who knew him, if they could have seen him.

"You're so... you're so... you're so... ohh, how wicked you are!" Liza said, choking with stifled tears, her angry, beautiful eyes flashing at him.

"Liza, I..."

"You're wicked, wicked, wicked, wicked!" She was wringing her hands. Velchaninov was completely at a loss.

"Liza, dear, if you knew what despair you drive me to!"

"Is it true that he'll come tomorrow? Is it true?" she asked imperiously.

"It's true, it's true! I'll bring him myself; I'll get him and bring him."

"He'll deceive me," Liza whispered, lowering her eyes.

"Doesn't he love you, Liza?"

"No, he doesn't."

"Has he hurt you? Has he?"

Liza looked at him darkly and was silent. She turned away from him again and sat stubbornly looking down. He started persuading her, spoke heatedly to her, was in a fever himself. Liza listened mistrustfully, hostilely, but she did listen. Her attention gladdened him extremely: he even began to explain to her what a drinking man was. He said that he himself loved her and would look after her father. Liza finally raised her eyes and gazed at him intently. He started telling her how he had once known her mama, and saw that she was getting caught up in his stories. Little by little she began gradually to answer his questions—but cautiously and monosyllabically, with stubbornness. She still did not give any reply to his main questions: she was stubbornly silent about everything concerning her former relations with her father. As he talked with her, Velchaninov took her little hand in his, as earlier, and would not let it go; she did not pull it away. The girl was not totally silent, however; she did let slip in her vague replies that she used to love her father more than her mama, because formerly her father had always loved her more, and her mama formerly had loved her less; but that when her mama was dying, she had kissed her a lot and wept, when everyone left the room and the two of them remained alone... and that she now loved her more than anyone, more than anyone, anyone in the world, and every night she loved her more than anyone. But the girl was indeed proud: catching herself letting it slip, she suddenly withdrew into herself again and fell silent; she even looked hatefully at Velchaninov for making her let it slip. Toward the end of their journey, her hysterical state had nearly passed, but she became terribly pensive and looked around like a little savage, sullenly, with a gloomy, predetermined stubbornness. As for the fact that she was now being taken into a strange home, where she had never been before, this seemed for the moment to embarrass her very little. She was tormented by something else, Velchaninov could see that; he guessed that she was ashamed of *him*, that she was precisely ashamed that her father had let her go with him so easily, as if he had thrown her away to him.

"She's ill," he thought, "maybe very; she's been tormented... Oh, mean, drunken creature! I understand him now!" He kept urging the coachman on; he had hopes in the country house, the air, the garden, the children, the new, the unfamiliar to her life, and then, later... But of what would come afterward he no longer had any doubts; there were full, clear hopes. Only one thing he knew absolutely: that he had never before experienced what he experienced then, and that it would stay with him for the rest of his life! "Here is the goal, here is life!" he thought rapturously.

Many thoughts flashed in him now, but he did not dwell on them and stubbornly avoided details: without the details, everything was becoming clear, everything was inviolable. His main plan formed of itself: "We can influence the scoundrel with our combined forces," he dreamed, "and he will leave Liza in Petersburg with the Pogoreltsevs, though at first only temporarily, for a certain period of time, and go away by himself; and Liza will be left for me; and that's all, what more is there to it? And... and, of course, he wishes it himself; otherwise why would he torment her." They finally arrived. The Pogoreltsevs' country house was indeed a lovely little place; they were met first of all by a noisy band of children who poured onto the porch of the house. Velchaninov had not visited in far too long, and the children were wild with joy: he was loved. The older ones shouted to him at once, even before he got out of the carriage:

"And how's your lawsuit, how's your lawsuit?" This was picked up by the smallest ones, who laughed and squealed following the older ones. He was teased there about his lawsuit. But, seeing Liza, they at once surrounded her and began studying her with silent and intent childish curiosity. Klavdia Petrovna came out, and her husband after her. She and her husband also both started from the first word, and laughing, with a question about the lawsuit.

Klavdia Petrovna was a lady of about thirty-seven, a plump and still beautiful brunette, with a fresh and rosy face. Her husband was about fifty-five, an intelligent and clever man, but a kindly fellow before all. Their house was in the fullest sense "his own home" for Velchaninov, as he himself put it. But a special circumstance also lay hidden here: some twenty years ago this Klavdia Petrovna had almost married Velchaninov, then still almost a boy, still a student. This had been a first love, fervent, ridiculous, and beautiful. It ended, however, with her marrying Pogoreltsev. They met again five years later, and it all ended in serene and quiet friendship. There forever remained a certain warmth, a certain special light shining in this relationship. Here everything in Velchaninov's memories was pure and irreproachable, and all the dearer to him in that it was perhaps so only here. In this family, he was simple, naive, kind, helped with the children, was never affected, admitted everything and confessed everything. More than once he had sworn to the Pogoreltsevs that he would live a little longer in the world and then move in with them completely and start living with them, never to part again. He thought of this intention to himself not at all as a joke.

He gave them quite a detailed account of all that was necessary about Liza; but his request alone, without any special accounts, would have been enough. Klavdia Petrovna kissed the "little orphan" and promised to do everything for her part. The children took Liza up and led her out to play in the garden. After half an hour of lively talk, Velchaninov got up

and started saying good-bye. He was so impatient that they all could notice it. They were all surprised: he had not visited in three weeks and was now leaving after half an hour. He laughed and swore to come the next day. It was brought to his notice that he was much too excited; he suddenly took Klavdia Petrovna by the hands and, under the pretext of having forgotten something very important, led her to another room.

"Remember what I told you—you alone, what even your husband doesn't know—about the T——year of my life?"

"I remember only too well; you spoke of it often."

"I wasn't speaking, I was confessing, and to you alone, you alone! I never told you the woman's last name; she's Trusotsky, the wife of this Trusotsky. It's she who died, and Liza, her daughter—is my daughter!"

"Is it certain? You're not mistaken?" Klavdia Petrovna asked in some agitation.

"Absolutely not, absolutely not!" Velchaninov uttered rapturously.

And, as briefly as possible, hurrying and terribly agitated, he told her—all. Klavdia Petrovna had known it all before, but she had not known the lady's last name. Velchaninov had become so frightened each time at the mere thought that someone he knew might one day meet Mme. Trusotsky and think of *him* having loved this woman *so much*, that he had not dared up to then to reveal "that woman's" name even to Klavdia Petrovna, his only friend.

"And the father knows nothing?" she asked, having heard the whole story.

"N-no, he does... That's what torments me, that I haven't made it all out yet!" Velchaninov went on heatedly. "He knows, he knows; I noticed it today and yesterday. But I have to find out how much of it he knows. That's why I'm in a hurry now. He'll come tonight. I'm perplexed, though, where he could have learned it—that is, learned *everything*. About Bagautov he knows everything, no question of it. But about me? You know how wives are able to reassure their husbands on such occasions! If an angel came down from heaven—the husband would believe not him, but her! Don't shake your head, don't condemn me, I condemn myself, and condemned myself for everything long, long ago!... You see, earlier, at his place, I was so sure he knew everything that I compromised myself before him. Believe me: I'm quite ashamed and pained that I met him so rudely yesterday. (I'll tell you everything later in more detail!) He came to me yesterday out of an invincible, malicious desire to let me know that he knew his offense and that the offender was known to him! That's the whole reason for this stupid appearance in a drunken state. But it's so natural on his part! He precisely came to reproach me! Generally, I conducted things too hotly this morning and yesterday. Imprudently stupid! I gave myself away! Why did he accost me at such a troubled moment? I tell you, he even tormented Liza, tormented a child, and probably also in reproach, to vent his spite if only on a child! Yes, he's spiteful—nonentity that he is, he's spiteful, even very much so. It goes without saying that he's nothing but a buffoon, though before, by God, he had the look of a decent man, as far as he could, but it's so natural that he's turned dissolute! Here, my friend, one must take a Christian view! And you know, my dear, my good one—I want to change completely toward him: I want to show him kindness. It will even be a 'good deed' on my part. Because, after all, I am guilty before him! Listen, you know, I'll tell you another thing: once in T———I suddenly needed four thousand roubles, and he gave it to me in a second, without any receipt, sincerely glad that he was able to please me, and I did take it then, I took it from his own hands, took money from him, do you hear, took it as from a friend!"

"Only be more prudent," Klavdia Petrovna observed worriedly to all this. "And how rapturous you are, really, I'm afraid for you! Of course, Liza's now my daughter, too, but there's so much here, so much that's still unresolved! And above all, be more circumspect now; you absolutely must be circumspect when you're in happiness or in such rapture; you're too magnanimous when you're in happiness," she added with a smile.

Everyone came out to see Velchaninov off; the children brought Liza, with whom they had been playing in the garden. They looked at her now, it seemed, with still greater perplexity than before. Liza turned completely shy when Velchaninov, taking his leave, kissed her in front of everyone and warmly repeated his promise to come the next day with her father. She was silent and did not look at him till the last minute, but then she suddenly seized him by the sleeve and pulled him somewhere aside, looking at him with imploring eyes; she wanted to tell him something. He took her to another room at once.

"What is it, Liza?" he asked tenderly and encouragingly, but she, still looking around timorously, pulled him farther into the corner; she wanted to hide completely from everyone.

"What is it, Liza, what is it?"

She was silent and undecided; she looked fixedly into his eyes with her blue eyes, and all the features of her little face expressed nothing but mad fear.

"He'll... hang himself!" she whispered as if in delirium.

"Who will hang himself?" Velchaninov asked in fright.

"He will, he will! During the night he wanted to hang himself from a noose!" the girl said, hurrying and breathless. "I saw it myself! Last night he wanted to hang himself from a noose, he told me, he did! He wanted to before, too, he's always wanted to... I saw it in the night..."

"It can't be!" whispered Velchaninov in perplexity. She suddenly rushed to kiss his hands; she wept, barely catching her breath from sobbing, she begged and pleaded with him, but he could understand nothing of her hysterical prattle. And forever after there remained in his memory, there came to him awake and in his dreams, those tormented eyes of a tormented child, who looked at him in mad fear and with her last hope.

"And can it be, can it be that she loves him so much?" he thought jealously and enviously, going back to town in feverish impatience. "She herself said today that she loved her mother more... maybe she hates him and doesn't love him at all..."

"And what is this: hang himself? What was she saying? A fool like him hang himself?... I must find out; I absolutely must find out! I must resolve everything as soon as possible—resolve it definitively!"

VII HUSBAND AND LOVER KISS

He was in a terrible hurry to "find out." "I was stunned earlier; I had no time earlier to reflect on it," he thought, recalling his first encounter with Liza, "but now I must find out." In order to find out the quicker, he gave orders in his impatience to drive straight to Trusotsky's place, but changed his mind at once: "No, better if he comes to me himself, and meanwhile I'll finish this damned business."

He feverishly got down to business; but this time he felt he was very distracted and ought not to be occupying himself with business matters. At five o'clock, on his way to have dinner, suddenly, for the first time, a funny thought came to his head: what if in fact he was, perhaps, only hindering things by interfering in the lawsuit himself, bustling and hanging out in offices and trying to catch his lawyer, who had begun to hide from him. He laughed merrily at his own supposition. "And if this thought had come to my head yesterday, I'd have been terribly upset," he added, still more merrily. Despite the merriment, he was growing ever more distracted and impatient; finally he fell to thinking; and though his uneasy mind kept clinging to many things, on the whole the result was not at all what he needed.

"I need him, this man!" he finally decided. "I've got to figure him out first and then decide. This is—a duel!"

Returning home at seven o'clock, he did not find Pavel Pavlovich there, which first caused him great surprise, then wrath, and then even despondency; finally, he began to be afraid. "God knows, God knows what it will end with!" he repeated, now pacing the room, now stretching out on the sofa, and constantly looking at his watch. Finally, at around nine o'clock, Pavel Pavlovich did appear. "If the man was being cunning, he couldn't have wangled anything better than this—the way I'm upset right now," he thought, suddenly completely cheered up and terribly merry.

To the pert and merry question: why had he taken so long in coming?—Pavel Pavlovich smiled crookedly, sat down casually, not like the day before, and somehow carelessly flung his hat with crape onto another chair. Velchaninov noticed the casualness at once and took it into consideration.

Calmly and without unnecessary words, without his former agitation, he told, as if making a report, how he had taken Liza, how nicely she had been received there, how good it was going to be for her, and little by little, as if completely forgetting Liza, imperceptibly came down to talking only about the Pogoreltsevs—that is, what nice people they were, how long he had known them, what a good and even influential man Pogoreltsev was, and the like. Pavel Pavlovich listened distractedly and from time to time glanced at the narrator, covertly, with a peevish and sly grin.

"What an ardent man you are," he muttered with some especially nasty smile.

"You, however, are somehow wicked today," Velchaninov observed vexedly.

"And why shouldn't I be wicked, sir, like everybody else?" Pavel Pavlovich suddenly heaved himself up, as if pouncing from around a corner; even as if he had just been waiting to pounce.

"That's entirely as you will," Velchaninov grinned. "I thought something might have happened to you?"

"And so it did happen, sir!" the man exclaimed, as if boasting that it had happened.

"What is it?"

Pavel Pavlovich waited a little before answering:

"Well, you see, sir, it's all our Stepan Mikhailovich at his whimsies... Bagautov, a most elegant Petersburg young man, of the highest society, sir."

"He didn't receive you again, or what?"

"No-no, this time I precisely was received, I was admitted for the first time, sir, and looked upon the countenance... only it was already a dead man's!..."

"What-a-at! Bagautov died?" Velchaninov was terribly surprised, though it would seem there was nothing for him to be so surprised at.

"Himself, sir! An unfailing friend of six years! He died yesterday around noon, and I didn't know! Maybe it was at the very moment when I came to inquire about his health. The funeral and burial are tomorrow, he's already lying in his little coffin, sir. The coffin's lined with damson velvet, trimmed with gold braid... he died of nervous fever, sir. I was admitted, admitted, I looked upon his countenance! I told them at the front door that I was considered a true friend, so I was admitted. What has he been pleased to do to me now, this true friend of six years—I ask you? Maybe I came to Petersburg just for his sake alone!"

"But why are you angry with him," Velchaninov laughed, "he didn't die on purpose!"

"But I'm saying it in pity; such a precious friend; this is what he meant to me, sir."

And Pavel Pavlovich suddenly, quite unexpectedly, put two fingers like horns over his bald forehead and went off into a long and quiet titter. He spent a whole half minute sitting like that, with horns and tittering, looking into Velchaninov's eyes as if reveling in his most sarcastic impudence. The latter was stupefied as if he were seeing some sort of ghost. But his stupefaction lasted no more than a tiny moment; a mocking smile, calm to the point of impudence, slowly came to his lips.

"And what might that signify?" he asked carelessly, drawing out his words.

"That signifies horns, sir," Pavel Pavlovich snapped, finally taking his fingers from his forehead. "That is... your horns?"

"My very own splendid acquisition!" Pavel Pavlovich again made a terribly nasty grimace. They both fell silent.

"You're a brave man, anyhow!" said Velchaninov.

"Because I showed you the horns? You know what, Alexei Ivanovich, you'd do better to treat me to something! I treated you in T—for a whole year, sir, every blessed day... Send for a little bottle, my throat's dry."

"With pleasure; you should have said so long ago. What'll you have?"

"Why you? make it *we*—we'll drink together, won't we?" Pavel Pavlovich peered into his eyes defiantly and at the same time with some strange uneasiness.

"Champagne?"

"What else? It's not vodka's turn yet, sir..."

Velchaninov rose unhurriedly, rang for Mavra downstairs, and gave the order.

"For the joy of a happy reunion, sir, after nine years of separation," Pavel Pavlovich tittered along needlessly and inappropriately. "Now you and you alone are left me as a true friend, sir! Stepan Mikhailovich Bagautov is no more! It's

as the poet said:

*The great Patroclus is no more,
Vile Thersites is living still!*⁶

And at the word "Thersites" he jabbed his finger at his own breast.

"You swine, why don't you explain yourself quicker, I don't like hints," Velchaninov thought to himself. Anger seethed in him, for a long time he had barely contained himself.

"Tell me this," he began vexedly, "if you accuse Stepan Mikhailovich so directly" (now he no longer called him simply Bagautov), "then it seems you should rejoice that your offender is dead; so why are you angry?"

"Why rejoice, sir? What's there to rejoice at?"

"I'm judging by your feelings."

"Heh, heh, you're mistaken about my feelings on that account, sir, as in the wise man's saying: 'A dead enemy is good, but a live one is even better,' hee, hee!"

"But you saw him alive every day for five years, I think, didn't you have enough of looking?" Velchaninov observed spitefully and impudently.

"But did I... did I know it then, sir?" Pavel Pavlovich suddenly heaved himself up, again as if pouncing from around a corner, even as if with a certain glee at having finally been asked a long-awaited question. "What do you take me for, Alexei Ivanovich?"

And some completely new and unexpected look suddenly flashed in his eyes, which as if completely transformed his spiteful and until then only vilely grimacing face.

"So you really knew nothing!" Velchaninov, perplexed, said with the most sudden amazement.

"So you think I knew, sir? You think I knew! Oh, what a breed—our Jupiters! With you a man is the same as a dog, and you judge everyone by your own paltry nature! There's for you, sir! Swallow that!" And he banged his fist on the table in rage, but at once got scared at his own banging and looked up timorously.

Velchaninov assumed a dignified air.

"Listen, Pavel Pavlovich, it decidedly makes no difference to me, you must agree, whether you knew or not. If you didn't know, it does you honor in any case, though... anyhow, I don't even understand why you've chosen me as your confidant..."

"I didn't mean you... don't be angry, I didn't mean you..." Pavel Pavlovich muttered, dropping his eyes.

Mavra came in with the champagne.

"Here it is!" Pavel Pavlovich cried, obviously glad of a way out, "and the glasses, dearie, the glasses—wonderful! Nothing more is required of you, my sweet. Already opened? Honor and glory to you, dear creature! Well, off you go!"

And, cheered up again, he once more looked boldly at Velchaninov.

"And confess," he suddenly tittered, "that you're terribly curious about all this, sir, and it by no means 'decidedly makes no difference,' as you were pleased to declare, so that you'd even be upset if I got up and left this very moment, sir, without explaining anything."

"Actually, I wouldn't be."

"Oh, you liar!" Pavel Pavlovich's smile said.

"Well, sir, let's begin!" and he poured wine in the glasses.

"Let's drink a toast," he pronounced, raising his glass, "to the health of our friend, the resting-in-peace Stepan Mikhailovich!"

He raised his glass and drank.

"I won't drink such a toast," Velchaninov put his glass down.

"Why's that? A nice little toast!"

"Listen here: when you came now, you weren't drunk?"

"I'd had a little. What of it, sir?"

"Nothing special, but I had the impression that yesterday, and especially this morning, you sincerely regretted the late Natalia Vassilievna."

"And who told you that I don't sincerely regret her now as well?" Pavel Pavlovich again pounced, as if he had again been jerked by a spring.

"That's not what I mean; but you must agree that you could be mistaken about Stepan Mikhailovich, and it's a serious matter."

Pavel Pavlovich smiled slyly and winked.

"And you'd like so much to find out how I myself found out about Stepan Mikhailovich!"

Velchaninov turned red:

"I repeat to you again that it makes no difference to me." And in rage he thought, "Why don't I throw him out right now, along with his bottle?" and turned redder still.

"Never mind, sir!" Pavel Pavlovich said, as if encouraging him, and poured himself another glass.

"I'll explain to you presently how I found out 'everything,' sir, and thereby satisfy your fiery wishes... for you're a fiery man, Alexei Ivanovich, a terribly fiery man, sir! heh, heh! only give me a little cigarette, because since the month of March I..."

"Here's your cigarette."

"I've become dissolute since the month of March, Alexei Ivanovich, and this is how it happened, sir, lend me your ear. Consumption, as you know yourself, my dearest friend," he was getting more and more familiar, "is a curious disease, sir. Quite often a consumptive person dies almost without suspecting he might die the next day, sir. I tell you that just five hours before, Natalia Vassilievna was planning to go in two weeks to visit her aunt thirty miles away. Besides, you're probably familiar with the habit, or, better to say, the trait common to many ladies, and perhaps gentlemen as well, sir,

of preserving their old trash, such as love correspondence, sir. The surest thing would be the stove, right, sir? No, every scrap of paper is carefully preserved in their little boxes and hold-alls; it's even numbered by years, by dates and categories. Whether it's very comforting or something—I don't know, sir; but it must be for the sake of pleasant memories. Since she was planning, five hours before the end, to go to her aunt's for the celebration, Natalia Vassilievna naturally had no thought of death, even to the very last hour, sir, and kept waiting for Koch. And so it happened, sir, that Natalia Vassilievna died, and a little ebony box inlaid with mother-of-pearl and silver was left in her desk. Such a pretty little box, with a key, sir, an heirloom, handed down from her grandmother. Well, sir—it was in this box that everything was revealed—that is, everything, sir, without any exception, by days and years, over two whole decades. And since Stepan Mikhailovich had a decided inclination for literature, having once even sent a passionate story to a magazine, there turned out to be nearly a hundred numbers of his works in the little chest—true, it was for five years, sir. Some numbers were even marked in Natalia Vassilievna's own hand. A pleasure for a husband, wouldn't you think, sir?"

Velchaninov quickly reflected and remembered that he had never written even one letter, even one note, to Natalia Vassilievna. And though he had written two letters from Petersburg, they had been addressed to both spouses, as had been arranged. And to Natalia Vassilievna's last letter, informing him of his dismissal, he had never replied.

After finishing his story, Pavel Pavlovich was silent for a whole minute, smiling importunately and expectantly.

"Why do you answer nothing to my little question, sir?" he spoke finally with obvious suffering.

"What little question?"

"About the pleasant feelings of a husband, sir, on opening the little chest."

"Eh, what business is that of mine!" Velchaninov waved his hand biliously, got up, and started pacing the room.

"And I bet you're now thinking: 'What a swine you are, to have pointed to your own horns,' heh, heh! A most squeamish man... you, sir!"

"I'm thinking nothing of the sort. On the contrary, you are much too annoyed by your offender's death, and you've drunk a lot of wine besides. I see nothing extraordinary in any of it; I understand too well why you needed a live Bagautov, and I'm prepared to respect your vexation, but..."

"And what did I need Bagautov for, in your opinion, sir?"

"That's your business."

"I'll bet you had in mind a duel, sir?"

"Devil take it!" Velchaninov restrained himself less and less, "I thought that, like any decent man... in such cases—one doesn't stoop to comical babble, to stupid clowning, to ridiculous complaints and vile hints, with which he besmirches himself still more, but acts clearly, directly, openly, like a decent man!"

"Heh, heh, yes, but maybe I'm not a decent man, sir?"

"That, again, is your business... and, anyhow, what the devil did you need a live Bagautov for?"

"Why, only so as to have a look at a nice friend, sir. We'd have taken a little bottle and had a drink together."

"He'd never have drunk with you."

"Why? Noblesse oblige? You drink with me, sir; is he any better than you?"

"I didn't drink with you."

"Why such pride all of a sudden, sir?"

Velchaninov suddenly burst into nervous and irritated laughter.

"Pah, the devil! but you're decidedly some sort of 'predatory type'! I thought you were just an 'eternal husband' and nothing more!"

"How's that? an 'eternal husband'? What does it mean?" Pavel Pavlovich suddenly pricked up his ears.

"Just so, one type of husband... it's too long a story. You'd better just clear out, your time is up; I'm sick of you!"

"And what's this about predatory? You said predatory?"

"I said you're a 'predatory type'—I said it to mock you."

"What sort of 'predatory type,' sir? Tell me, please, Alexei Ivanovich, for God's sake, or for Christ's sake."

"Well, that's enough, enough!" Velchaninov cried suddenly, again getting terribly angry. "Your time is up, clear out!"

"No, it's not enough, sir!" Pavel Pavlovich, too, jumped up. "Even though you're sick of me, it's still not enough, because first you and I must have a drink and clink glasses! We'll have a drink, and then I'll go, but now it's not enough!"

"Pavel Pavlovich, can you clear the hell out of here today or not?"

"I can clear the hell out of here, sir, but first we'll drink! You said you don't want to drink precisely *with me*; well, but *I want* that you drink precisely with me!"

He was no longer clowning, no longer tittering. Everything in him was again as if transformed suddenly and was now so opposite to the whole figure and tone of the just-now Pavel Pavlovich that Velchaninov was decidedly taken aback.

"Eh, let's drink, Alexei Ivanovich, eh, don't refuse!" Pavel Pavlovich went on, gripping him firmly by the arm and looking strangely into his face. Obviously, this was not just a matter of drinking.

"Yes, perhaps," the man muttered, "and where's... this is swill..."

"Exactly two glasses left, pure swill, sir, but we'll drink and clink glasses, sir! Here, sir, kindly take your glass."

They clinked and drank.

"Well, and if so, if so... ah!" Pavel Pavlovich suddenly seized his forehead with his hand and for a few moments remained in that position. Velchaninov imagined that he was now going to up and speak out the very *last* word. But Pavel Pavlovich did not speak anything out for him; he only looked at him and quietly stretched his mouth again into the same sly and winking smile.

"What do you want from me, you drunk man! You're fooling with me!" Velchaninov cried frenziedly, stamping his feet.

"Don't shout, don't shout, why shout?" Pavel Pavlovich hastily waved his hand. "I'm not fooling with you, I'm not! Do you know what you've—this is what you've become for me now!"

And he suddenly seized his hand and kissed it. Velchaninov had no time to recover himself.

"This is what you are for me now, sir! And now—to all the devils with me!"

"Wait, stop!" the recovered Velchaninov cried, "I forgot to tell you..."

Pavel Pavlovich turned around at the door.

"You see," Velchaninov began to mutter extremely quickly, blushing and averting his eyes completely, "you should be at the Pogoreltsevs' tomorrow without fail... to get acquainted and to thank them—without fail..."

"Without fail, without fail, how could I not understand, sir!" Pavel Pavlovich picked up with extreme readiness, quickly waving his hand as a sign that there was no need to remind him.

"Besides, Liza is also waiting for you very much. I promised..."

"Liza," Pavel Pavlovich suddenly came back again, "Liza? Do you know, sir, what Liza was for me, was and is, sir? Was and is!" he suddenly cried almost in frenzy. "But... Heh! That's for later, sir; that's all for later... and now—it's no longer enough for me that you and I drank together, Alexei Ivanovich, it's another satisfaction that's needed, sir!"

He put his hat on the chair and, as earlier, slightly breathless, gazed at him.

"Kiss me, Alexei Ivanovich," he suddenly offered.

"Are you drunk?" the man cried, and drew back.

"I am, sir, but kiss me anyway, Alexei Ivanovich, eh, kiss me! I did kiss your hand just now!"

Alexei Ivanovich was silent for a few moments, as if hit on the head with a club. But suddenly he bent down to Pavel Pavlovich, who came up to his shoulder, and kissed him on the lips, which smelled very strongly of wine. He was not entirely sure, incidentally, that he had kissed him.

"Well, and now, now..." Pavel Pavlovich shouted again in a drunken frenzy, flashing his drunken eyes, "now here's what, sir: I had thought then—'not this one, too? If even this one,' I thought, 'if even this one, too, then who can one believe after that!'"

Pavel Pavlovich suddenly dissolved in tears.

"So do you understand what kind of friend you've remained for me now?!"

And he ran out of the room with his hat. Velchaninov again stood for several minutes in the same spot, as after Pavel Pavlovich's first visit.

"Eh, a drunken buffoon and nothing more!" he waved his hand.

"Decidedly nothing more!" he confirmed energetically when he was already undressed and lying in bed.

VIII LIZA IS SICK

The next morning while waiting for Pavel Pavlovich, who had promised not to be late for going to the Pogoreltsevs', Velchaninov paced the room sipping his coffee, smoking, and being conscious every moment that he was like a man who wakes up in the morning and remembers every instant that he had been slapped the day before. "Hm... he understands only too well what the point is, and will take revenge on me with Liza!" he thought in fear.

The dear image of the poor child flashed sadly before him. His heart beat faster at the thought that today, soon, in two hours, he would see *his* Liza again. "Eh, what is there to talk about!" he decided hotly. "My whole life and my whole purpose are now in that! What are all these slaps and remembrances!... And what have I even lived for so far? Disorder and sadness... but now—everything's different, everything's changed!"

But, despite his rapture, he fell to pondering more and more.

"He'll torment me with Liza—that's clear! And he'll torment Liza. It's over this that he'll finally do me in, for *everything*. Hm... no question, I can't allow yesterday's escapades on his part," he suddenly blushed, "and... and look, anyhow, he's not here yet, and it's already past eleven!"

He waited a long time, until half past twelve, and his anguish grew more and more. Pavel Pavlovich did not come. At last the long-stirring thought that he would not come on purpose, solely in order to perform yet another escapade like yesterday's, made him thoroughly vexed: "He knows I'm counting on him. And what will happen now with Liza! And how can I come to her without him!"

Finally, he could not stand it and at exactly one in the afternoon he himself went galloping to the Pokrov. In the rooms he was told that Pavel Pavlovich had not slept at home and had come only after eight in the morning, stayed for a brief quarter of an hour, and left again. Velchaninov was standing by the door of Pavel Pavlovich's room, listening to the maid talking to him, and mechanically turning the handle of the locked door, tugging it back and forth. Recollecting himself, he spat, let go of the latch, and asked to be taken to Marya Sysoevna. But she, when she heard him, willingly came out herself.

She was a kind woman, "a woman of noble feelings," as Velchaninov referred to her later when telling Klavdia Petrovna about his conversation with her. After asking briefly how his trip yesterday with the "missy" had gone, Marya Sysoevna at once got to telling about Pavel Pavlovich. In her words, "only except for the little child, she'd have got rid of him long ago. The hotel already got rid of him because he was far too outrageous. Well, isn't it a sin to bring a wench at night when there's a little child there who already understands! He shouts: 'She'll be your mother, if I want her to be!' And, would you believe it, wench as she was, even she spat in his mug. He shouts: 'You're not my daughter—you're a whore's spawn.'"

"What are you saying!" Velchaninov was frightened.

"I heard it myself. Though he's a drunk man, like as if unconscious, still it's no good in front of a little child; youngling as she is, she'll still get it in her mind! The missy cries, I could see she's all tormented. And the other day here in the yard we had a real sin happen: a commissary or whatever, so people said, took a room in the hotel in the evening and by morning he hanged himself. They said he'd squandered money. People come running, Pavel Pavlovich isn't home, and the child goes around unattended, so there I see her in the corridor among the people, peeking from behind, and staring so strangely at the hanging man. I quickly brought her here. And what do you think—she's trembling all over, got all black,

and the moment I brought her here she just fell into a fit. She thrashed and thrashed, and wouldn't come out of it. Convulsions or whatever, only from that time on she got sick. He came, found out about it, and pinched her all over, because he doesn't really hit, it's more like pinches, then he got soused with wine, came and started scaring her, saying: 'I'll hang myself, too, on account of you; from this very cord,' he says, 'I'll hang myself from the curtain cord,' and he makes a noose right in front of her. And the girl's beside herself—she cries, puts her little arms around him: 'I won't,' she cries, 'I won't ever.' Such a pity!"

Though Velchaninov had expected something very strange, these stories struck him so much that he did not even believe them. Marya Sysoevna told him much more: there was, for instance, one occasion when, if it had not been for Marya Sysoevna, Liza might have thrown herself out the window. He left the rooms as if drunk himself. "I'll kill him with a stick, like a dog, on the head!" he kept imagining. And for a long time he kept repeating it to himself.

He hired a carriage and set off for the Pogoreltsevs'. Still within the city, the carriage was forced to stop at an intersection, by a bridge across the canal, across which a big funeral procession was making its way. On both sides of the bridge a number of vehicles crowded, waiting; people also stopped. The funeral was a wealthy one and the train of coaches following it was very long, and then in one of these following coaches Pavel Pavlovich's face suddenly flashed before Velchaninov. He would not have believed it, if Pavel Pavlovich had not thrust himself out the window and nodded to him, smiling. Apparently he was terribly glad to have recognized Velchaninov: he even began making signs from the coach with his hand. Velchaninov jumped out of his carriage and, in spite of the crowd and the policemen and the fact that Pavel Pavlovich's coach was already driving onto the bridge, ran right up to the window. Pavel Pavlovich was alone.

"What's the matter with you," Velchaninov cried, "why didn't you come? what are you doing here?"

"My duty, sir—don't shout, don't shout—I'm doing my duty," Pavel Pavlovich tittered, squinting merrily. "I'm accompanying the mortal remains of my true friend Stepan Mikhailovich."

"That's all absurd, you drunken, crazy man!" Velchaninov, puzzled for a moment, cried still louder. "Get out right now and come with me—right now!"

"I can't, sir, it's a duty, sir..."

"I'll drag you out," Velchaninov screamed.

"And I'll raise a cry, sir! I'll raise a cry!" Pavel Pavlovich went on with the same merry titter—just as if it were all a game—hiding, however, in the far corner of the coach.

"Watch out, watch out, you'll get run over!" a policeman shouted. Indeed, some extraneous carriage had broken through the train at the descent from the bridge and was causing alarm. Velchaninov was forced to jump down; other vehicles and people pushed him farther back. He spat and made his way to his carriage.

"In any case, I can't take him there the way he is!" he thought with continuing anxious amazement.

When he had related Marya Sysoevna's story and the strange encounter at the funeral to Klavdia Petrovna, she fell to thinking hard: "I'm afraid for you," she said to him, "you must break all relations with him, and the sooner the better."

"He's a drunken buffoon and nothing more!" Velchaninov cried out vehemently. "Why should I be afraid of him! And how can I break relations when Liza's here? Remember about Liza!"

Meanwhile Liza was lying sick in bed; since last evening she had been in a fever, and they were awaiting a well-known doctor from the city, for whom a messenger had been sent at daybreak. All this definitively upset Velchaninov. Klavdia Petrovna took him to the sick girl.

"Yesterday I watched her very closely," she observed, stopping outside Liza's room. "She's a proud and gloomy child; she's ashamed that she's with us and that her father abandoned her like that; that's the whole of her illness, in my opinion."

"How, abandoned her? Why do you think he's abandoned her?"

"From the fact alone that he let her come here to a completely strange house, and with a man... also almost a stranger, or in such relations..."

"But I took her myself, by force, I don't find..."

"Ah, my God, even a child like Liza could find it! In my opinion, he'll simply never come."

Seeing Velchaninov alone, Liza was not surprised, she only smiled sorrowfully and turned her feverish little head to the wall. She did not respond at all to Velchaninov's timid consolations and ardent promises to bring her father to her the next day without fail. Coming out of her room, he suddenly wept.

The doctor came only toward evening. Having examined the sick girl, he frightened everyone from the first word by observing that he ought to have been sent for sooner. When told that the girl had become sick only the evening before, he did not believe it at first. "Everything depends on how this night goes," he finally decided, and, giving his orders, he left, promising to come the next day as early as possible. Velchaninov wanted absolutely to stay overnight, but Klavdia Petrovna herself convinced him to try once more "to bring that monster here."

"Once more?" Velchaninov repeated in frenzy. "Why, I'll tie him up now and bring him here with my own hands!"

The thought of tying Pavel Pavlovich up and bringing him with his own hands suddenly took possession of him to the point of extreme impatience. "Now I don't feel guilty before him for anything, not for anything!" he said to Klavdia Petrovna as he was taking leave of her. "I renounce all the base, tearful words I said here yesterday!" he added indignantly.

Liza was lying with her eyes closed, apparently asleep; she seemed to be better. When Velchaninov bent down carefully to her little head, to kiss at least the edge of her dress in farewell—she suddenly opened her eyes as if she had been waiting for him, and whispered: "Take me away."

It was a quiet, sorrowful request, without any shadow of yesterday's irritation, but at the same time one could hear something in it, as if she herself were completely certain that her request would not be granted for anything. As soon as Velchaninov, quite in despair, began assuring her that it was impossible, she silently closed her eyes and did not say a word more, as if she did not hear or see him.

On reaching the city, he gave orders to drive straight to the Pokrov. It was already ten o'clock; Pavel Pavlovich was not in his rooms. Velchaninov waited for him for a whole half hour, pacing the corridor in morbid impatience. Marya

Sysoevna finally convinced him that Pavel Pavlovich would come back perhaps only toward morning, at daybreak. "Well, then I, too, will come at daybreak," Velchaninov resolved, and, beside himself, went home.

But what was his amazement when, even before entering his place, he heard from Mavra that yesterday's visitor had been waiting for him since before ten.

"And he had his tea here, and sent for wine again, and gave me a fiver for the purpose."

IX A PHANTOM

Pavel Pavlovich had made himself extremely comfortable. He was sitting in yesterday's chair, smoking cigarettes, and had just poured himself the fourth and last glass from the bottle. A teapot and a glass of unfinished tea stood near him on the table. His flushed face radiated good humor. He had even taken his tailcoat off, summer-fashion, and was sitting in his waistcoat.

"Excuse me, my most faithful friend!" he cried out, seeing Velchaninov and leaping up from his place to put his tailcoat on. "I took it off for the greater enjoyment of the moment..."

Velchaninov approached him menacingly.

"You're not completely drunk yet? Can I still talk with you?"

Pavel Pavlovich was somewhat taken aback.

"No, not completely... I commemorated the deceased, but—not completely, sir..."

"Can you understand me?"

"That's what I came for, to understand you, sir."

"Well, then I'll begin directly with the fact that you are a blackguard!" Velchaninov shouted in a breaking voice.

"If you begin with that, sir, what will you end with?" Pavel Pavlovich, obviously much frightened, made a slight attempt to protest, but Velchaninov was shouting without listening:

"Your daughter is dying, she's sick; have you abandoned her or not?"

"Dying is she, sir?"

"She's sick, sick, extremely dangerously sick!"

"Maybe it's some little fits, sir..."

"Don't talk nonsense! She's ex-treme-ly sick! You ought to have gone, if only so as to..."

"To express my thanks, sir, my thanks for their hospitality! I understand only too well, sir! Alexei Ivanovich, my dear, my perfect one," he suddenly seized his hand in both of his own, and, with the drunken emotion, almost in tears, as if asking forgiveness, proceeded to shout: "Alexei Ivanovich, don't shout, don't shout! If I die, if I fall, drunk, into the Neva now—what of it, sir, considering the true meaning of things? And we can always go to Mr. Pogoreltsev's, sir..."

Velchaninov caught himself and held back a little.

"You're drunk, and therefore I don't understand in what sense you're speaking," he remarked severely. "I am always ready to have a talk with you; the sooner the better, even... I came so as... But before all you must know that I'm taking measures: you must spend the night here! Tomorrow morning I take you and off we go. I won't let you out!" he screamed again. "I'll tie you up and bring you with my own hands!... Does this sofa suit you?" Breathless, he pointed to the wide and soft sofa that stood opposite the sofa on which he himself slept, against the other wall.

"Good heavens, sir, but for me, anywhere..."

"Not anywhere, but on this sofa! Here's a sheet for you, a blanket, a pillow, take them" (Velchaninov took it all out of a wardrobe and hurriedly threw it to Pavel Pavlovich, who obediently held out his arms). "Make your bed immediately, im-med-i-ate-ly!"

The loaded-down Pavel Pavlovich stood in the middle of the room, as if undecided, with a long, drunken smile on his drunken face; but at Velchaninov's repeated menacing cry, he suddenly started bustling about as fast as he could, moved the table aside, and, puffing, began to spread and smooth out the sheet. Velchaninov came over to help him; he was partly pleased with his guest's obedience and fright.

"Finish your glass and lie down," he commanded again; he felt he could not help but command. "Was it you who ordered wine sent for?"

"Myself, sir, for wine... I knew, Alexei Ivanovich, that you wouldn't send for more, sir."

"It's good that you knew that, but you need to learn still more. I tell you once again that I've taken measures now: I'll no longer suffer your clowning, nor yesterday's drunken kisses!"

"I myself understand, Alexei Ivanovich, that it was possible only once, sir," Pavel Pavlovich grinned.

Hearing this answer, Velchaninov, who was pacing the room, suddenly stopped almost solemnly in front of Pavel Pavlovich:

"Pavel Pavlovich, speak directly! You're intelligent, I acknowledge it again, but I assure you that you are on a false path! Speak directly, act directly, and, I give you my word of honor—I will answer to anything you like!"

Pavel Pavlovich again grinned his long smile, which alone was enough to enrage Velchaninov.

"Wait!" he cried again, "don't pretend, I can see through you! I repeat: I give you my word of honor that I am ready to answer to *everything*, and you will receive every possible satisfaction, that is, every, even the impossible! Oh, how I wish you would understand me!..."

"If you're so good, sir," Pavel Pavlovich cautiously moved closer to him, "then, sir, I'm very interested in what you mentioned yesterday about the predatory type, sir!..."

Velchaninov spat and again began pacing the room, still quicker than before.

"No, Alexei Ivanovich, sir, don't you spit, because I'm very interested and came precisely to verify... My tongue doesn't quite obey me, but forgive me, sir. Because about this 'predatory' type and the 'placid' one, sir, I myself read something in a magazine, in the criticism section⁷—I remembered it this morning... I'd simply forgotten it, sir, and, to tell the truth, I

didn't understand it then, either. I precisely wished to clarify: the late Stepan Mikhailovich Bagautov, sir—was he 'predatory' or 'placid'? How to reckon him, sir?"

Velchaninov still kept silent, without ceasing to pace.

"The predatory type is the one," he suddenly stopped in fury, "is the man who would rather poison Bagautov in a glass, while 'drinking champagne' with him in the name of a pleasant encounter with him, as you drank with me yesterday—and would not go accompanying his coffin to the cemetery, as you did today, devil knows out of which of your hidden, underground, nasty strivings and clowning which besmirch only you yourself! You yourself!"

"Exactly right, he wouldn't go, sir," Pavel Pavlovich confirmed, "only why is it me, sir, that you're so..."

"It's not the man," Velchaninov, excited, was shouting without listening, "not the man who imagines God knows what to himself, sums up all justice and law, learns his offense by rote, whines, clowns, minces, hangs on people's necks, and—lo and behold—all his time gets spent on it! Is it true that you wanted to hang yourself? Is it?"

"Maybe I blurted something out when I was drunk—I don't remember, sir. It's somehow indecent, Alexei Ivanovich, for us to go pouring poison into glasses. Besides being an official in good standing—I'm not without capital, and I may want to get married again, sir."

"And you'd be sent to hard labor."

"Well, yes, there's also that unpleasantness, sir, though in the courts nowadays they introduce lots of mitigating circumstances. But I wanted to tell you a killingly funny little anecdote, Alexei Ivanovich, I remembered it in the coach earlier, sir. You just said: 'Hangs on people's necks.' Maybe you remember Semyon Petrovich Livtsov, sir, he visited us in T——while you were there; well, he had a younger brother, also considered a Petersburg young man, served in the governor's office in V—— and also shone with various qualities. He once had an argument with Golubenko, a colonel, at a gathering, in the presence of ladies, including the lady of his heart, and reckoned himself insulted, but he swallowed his offense and concealed it; and Golubenko meanwhile won over the lady of his heart and offered her his hand. And what do you think? This Livtsov—he even sincerely started a friendship with Golubenko, was reconciled with him completely, and moreover, sir—got himself invited to be best man, held the crown,⁸ and once they came back from church, went up to congratulate and kiss Golubenko, and in front of the whole noble company, in front of the governor, in a tailcoat and curled hair himself, sir—he up and stabbed him in the gut with a knife—Golubenko went sprawling! His own best man, it's such a shame, sir! But that's not all! The main thing was that after stabbing him with the knife, he turned around: 'Ah, what have I done! Ah, what is it I've done!'—tears flow, he shakes, throws himself on all their necks, even the ladies', sir: 'Ah, what have I done! Ah, what is it I've done now!' heh, heh, heh! it's killing, sir. Only it was too bad about Golubenko; but he recovered from it, sir."

"I don't see why you've told this to me," Velchaninov frowned severely.

"But it's all on account of that, sir that he did stab him with a knife, sir," Pavel Pavlovich tittered. "You can even see he's not the type, that he's a sop of a man, if he forgot decency itself out of fear and threw himself on ladies' necks in the presence of the governor—and yet he did stab him, sir, he got his own! It's only for that, sir."

"Get the hell out of here," Velchaninov suddenly screamed in a voice not his own, just as if something had come unhinged in him, "get out of here with your underground trash, you're underground trash yourself—thinks he can scare me—child-tormentor—mean man—scoundrel, scoundrel, scoundrel!" he shouted, forgetting himself and choking on every word.

Pavel Pavlovich cringed all over, the drunkenness even fell from him; his lips trembled.

"Is it me, Alexei Ivanovich, that you're calling a scoundrel—you calling me, sir?"

But Velchaninov had already recovered himself.

"I'm ready to apologize," he answered, after pausing briefly in gloomy reflection, "but only in the case that you yourself wish to be direct, and that at once."

"And in your place I'd apologize anyway, Alexei Ivanovich."

"Very well, so be it," Velchaninov again paused briefly, "I apologize to you; but you must agree, Pavel Pavlovich, that after all this I no longer reckon myself as owing to you, that is, I'm speaking with regard to the *whole* matter, and not only the present case."

"Never mind, sir, what is there to reckon?" Pavel Pavlovich grinned, looking down, however.

"And if so, all the better, all the better! Finish your wine and lie down, because I'm not letting you go even so..."

"What of the wine, sir..." Pavel Pavlovich, as if a bit embarrassed, nevertheless went up to the table and began to finish his already long filled last glass. Perhaps he had drunk a lot before then, so that his hand shook now and he splashed some of the wine on the floor, on his shirt, and on his waistcoat, but he drank it to the bottom even so, just as if he were unable to leave it undrunk, and, having respectfully placed the empty glass on the table, obediently went over to his bed to undress.

"Wouldn't it be better... not to spend the night?" he said suddenly, for some reason or other, having taken one boot off already and holding it in his hands.

"No, not better!" Velchaninov replied irately, pacing the room tirelessly, without glancing at him.

The man undressed and lay down. A quarter of an hour later, Velchaninov also lay down and put out the candle.

He had trouble falling asleep. Something new, confusing the *matter* still more, appearing suddenly from somewhere, alarmed him now, and at the same time he felt that, for some reason, he was ashamed of this alarm. He was dozing off, but some sort of rustling suddenly awakened him. He turned at once to look at Pavel Pavlovich's bed. The room was dark (the curtains were fully drawn), but it seemed to him that Pavel Pavlovich was not lying down but had gotten up and was sitting on the bed.

"What's with you?" Velchaninov called.

"A shade, sir," Pavel Pavlovich uttered, barely audibly, after waiting a little.

"What's that? What kind of shade?"

"There, in that room, through the doorway, I saw as if a shade, sir."

"Whose shade?" Velchaninov asked, after a brief pause.

"Natalia Vassilievna's, sir."

Velchaninov stood on the rug and himself peeked through the hall into the other room, the door to which was always left open. There were no curtains on the windows there, only blinds, and so it was much brighter.

"There's nothing in that room, and you are drunk—lie down!" Velchaninov said, lay down, and wrapped himself in the blanket. Pavel Pavlovich did not say a word and lay down as well.

"And have you ever seen a shade before?" Velchaninov suddenly asked, some ten minutes later.

"I think I did once, sir," Pavel Pavlovich responded weakly and also after a while. Then silence fell again.

Velchaninov could not have said for certain whether he slept or not, but about an hour went by—and suddenly he turned over again: was it some kind of rustling that awakened him?—he did not know that either, but it seemed to him that amid the perfect darkness something was standing over him, white, not having reached him yet, but already in the middle of the room. He sat up in bed and stared for a whole minute.

"Is that you, Pavel Pavlovich?" he said in a weakened voice. His own voice, sounding suddenly in the silence and darkness, seemed somehow strange to him.

There came no reply, but there was no longer any doubt that someone was standing there.

"Is that you... Pavel Pavlovich?" he repeated more loudly, even so loudly that if Pavel Pavlovich had been peacefully asleep in his bed, he could not have failed to wake up and reply.

But again there came no reply, and instead it seemed to him that this white and barely distinguishable figure moved still closer to him. Then a strange thing happened: something in him suddenly as if came unhinged, just as earlier, and he shouted with all his might in the most absurd, enraged voice, choking on almost every word:

"If you, you drunken buffoon—dare merely to think—that you can—frighten me—I'll turn to the wall, cover my head with the blanket, and not turn around once during the whole night—to prove to you how greatly I value—even if you stand there till morning... buffoonishly... and I spit on you!"

And, having spat furiously in the direction of the presumed Pavel Pavlovich, he suddenly turned to the wall, wrapped himself, as he had said, in the blanket, and as if froze in that position without moving. A dead silence fell. Whether the shade was moving closer or remained where it was—he could not tell, but his heart was pounding—pounding—pounding... At least five full minutes went by; and suddenly, from two steps away, came the weak, quite plaintive voice of Pavel Pavlovich:

"Alexei Ivanovich, I got up to look for..." (and he named a most necessary household object). "I didn't find it there where I was... I wanted to look quietly by your bed, sir."

"Then why were you silent... when I shouted!" Velchaninov asked in a faltering voice, after waiting for about half a minute.

"I was frightened, sir. You shouted so... I got frightened, sir."

"It's in the corner to the left, toward the door, in the cupboard, light a candle..."

"I'll do without a candle, sir..." Pavel Pavlovich said humbly, going to the corner. "Do forgive me, Alexei Ivanovich, for troubling you so... I suddenly felt so drunk, sir..."

But the man made no reply. He went on lying face to the wall and lay like that for the whole night without turning once. Did he really want so much to keep his word and show his scorn?—He himself did not know what was happening to him; his nervous disorder turned, finally, almost into delirium, and for a long time he could not fall asleep. Waking up the next morning past nine o'clock, he suddenly gave a start and sat up in bed as if he had been pushed—Pavel Pavlovich was no longer in the room! All that was left was an empty, unmade bed, but the man himself had slipped away at daybreak.

"I just knew it!" Velchaninov slapped himself on the forehead.

X AT THE CEMETERY

The doctor's apprehensions proved justified, and Liza suddenly grew worse—much worse than Velchaninov and Klavdia Petrovna could have imagined the day before. In the morning Velchaninov found the sick girl still conscious, though all burning with fever; he insisted later that she smiled at him and even gave him her hot little hand. Whether this was true or he unwittingly invented it for himself as a consolation—he had no time to check; by nightfall the sick girl was already unconscious, and so it continued throughout her illness. On the tenth day after her move to the country, she died.

This was a sorrowful time for Velchaninov; the Pogoreltsevs even feared for him. The greater part of these difficult days he lived with them. In the very last days of Liza's illness, he spent whole hours sitting alone somewhere in a corner, apparently not thinking of anything; Klavdia Petrovna would come over to distract him, but he responded little, at times clearly finding it burdensome to talk with her. Klavdia Petrovna had not even expected that "all this would produce such an impression" on him. Most of all he was distracted by the children; with them he even laughed at times; but almost every hour he would get up from his chair and go on tiptoe to look at the sick girl. At times it seemed to him that she recognized him. He had no more hope for recovery than anyone else, yet he would not go far from the room in which Liza lay dying, and usually sat in the room next door.

A couple of times, however, during these days as well, he suddenly displayed an extreme activity: he would suddenly get up, rush to Petersburg to see doctors, invite the most famous ones, gather consultations. The second, and last, of these consultations took place on the eve of the sick girl's death. Some three days prior to that, Klavdia Petrovna had talked insistently with Velchaninov about the necessity of finally discovering the whereabouts of Mr. Trusotsky: "In case of a calamity, Liza could not even be buried without him." Velchaninov mumbled that he would write him. Then old Pogoreltsev announced that he himself would find him through the police. Velchaninov finally wrote a two-line note and took it to the Pokrovsky Hotel. Pavel Pavlovich, as usual, was not at home, and he handed the note to Marya Sysoevna to be passed on.

Finally, Liza died, on a beautiful summer evening, together with the setting sun, and only then did Velchaninov seem to recover himself. When the dead girl was prepared, dressed in a festive white dress from one of Klavdia Petrovna's daughters, and laid out on the table in the drawing room,⁹ with flowers in her little folded hands—he went up to Klavdia Petrovna and, flashing his eyes, announced to her that he would at once bring “the murderer” there as well. Ignoring advice that he wait till the next day, he immediately went to town.

He knew where to find Pavel Pavlovich; he had gone to Petersburg not for doctors only. At times during those days it had seemed to him that if he were to bring her father to the dying Liza, she, on hearing his voice, would recover herself; then, like a desperate man, he would start looking for him. Pavel Pavlovich's quarters were still in the rooming house, but there was no point even in asking there. “He doesn't spend the night or even come home for three days in a row,” Marya Sysoevna reported, “and when by chance he comes back drunk, he spends less than an hour and then drags himself off again—quite haywire.” A floorboy from the Pokrovsky Hotel told Velchaninov, among other things, that Pavel Pavlovich once used to visit some girls on Voznesensky Prospect. Velchaninov immediately found the girls. Showered with gifts and treats, these persons at once remembered their visitor, chiefly by the crape on his hat, and straight away denounced him, of course, for not coming to them anymore. One of them, Katya, undertook “to find Pavel Pavlovich whenever you like, because he never leaves Mashka Prostakova, and there's no bottom to his money, and this Mashka isn't Prostakova, she's Shystakova, and she's been in the hospital, and if she, Katya, wanted to, she could pack her off to Siberia at once, she'd only have to say the word.” Katya, however, did not find him that time, but gave a firm promise for the next time. It was in her assistance that Velchaninov now placed his hopes.

Having reached town by ten o'clock, he immediately sent for her, paying where he had to for her absence, and set out with her on his search. He did not yet know himself what, in fact, he was going to do now with Pavel Pavlovich: kill him for something, or simply look for him, so as to inform him of his daughter's death and the need for his assistance in the funeral? First off they had no luck: it turned out that Mashka Shystakova had had a fight with Pavel Pavlovich two days before, and that some cashier had “smashed Pavel Pavlovich's head in with a bench.” In short, for a long time he refused to be found and, finally, only at two o'clock in the morning, coming out of some establishment he had been directed to, did Velchaninov himself suddenly and unexpectedly run into him.

Pavel Pavlovich, completely drunk, was being led toward this establishment by two ladies; one of the ladies held him under the arm, and from behind they were accompanied by one stalwart and loose-limbed pretender, who was shouting at the top of his lungs and threatening Pavel Pavlovich terribly with some sort of horrors. He shouted, among other things, that he had “exploited him and poisoned his life.” The matter, it seemed, had to do with some money; the ladies were hurrying and very afraid. Seeing Velchaninov, Pavel Pavlovich rushed to him with outstretched arms, shouting bloody murder:

“Brother, dear, protect me!”

At the sight of Velchaninov's athletic figure, the pretender instantly effaced himself; the triumphant Pavel Pavlovich brandished his fist after him and gave a cry of victory; here Velchaninov seized him furiously by the shoulders and, himself not knowing why, started shaking him with both hands, so that his teeth clacked. Pavel Pavlovich stopped shouting at once and stared at his torturer with dim-witted, drunken fright. Probably not knowing what else to do with him, Velchaninov firmly bent him down and sat him on a hitching post.

“Liza died!” he said to him.

Pavel Pavlovich, still not taking his eyes off him, sat on the hitching post, supported by one of the ladies. He understood, finally, and his face suddenly became somehow pinched.

“Died...” he whispered somehow strangely. Whether he grinned drunkenly with his long, nasty smile, or something went awry in his face, Velchaninov could not tell, but a moment later Pavel Pavlovich made an attempt to lift his trembling right hand so as to cross himself; the cross, however, did not come off, and the trembling hand sank down. A little later he slowly got up from the hitching post, caught hold of his lady, and, supported by her, went on his way, seemingly oblivious, as if Velchaninov were not there. But he seized him again by the shoulder.

“Do you understand, drunken monster, that without you it won't even be possible to bury her!” he cried, suffocating.

The man turned his head toward him.

“Remember... the artillery... lieutenant?” he mumbled, moving his tongue thickly.

“Wha-a-at?” Velchaninov screamed, shuddering painfully.

“There's the father for you! Go look for him... to bury...”

“You're lying!” Velchaninov cried like a lost man. “It's out of spite... I just knew you'd have it ready for me!”

Forgetting himself, he raised his terrible fist over Pavel Pavlovich's head. Another moment—and he would perhaps have killed him with one blow; the ladies shrieked and flew off, but Pavel Pavlovich did not bat an eye. Some sort of frenzy of the most beastly spite distorted his whole face.

“And do you know,” he spoke much more firmly, almost as if not drunk, “our Russian——?” (And he uttered a swearword most unfit for print.) “Well, take yourself there!” Then he tore violently from Velchaninov's grip, stumbled, and nearly fell. The ladies picked him up and this time ran, shrieking, and almost dragging Pavel Pavlovich with them. Velchaninov now offered no pursuit.

The next day, at one o'clock in the afternoon, a quite decent middle-aged official in uniform came to the Pogoreltsevs' country house and politely handed Klavdia Petrovna a packet addressed to her, on behalf of Pavel Pavlovich Trusotsky. The packet contained a letter with an enclosed three hundred roubles and the necessary certificates concerning Liza. Pavel Pavlovich wrote briefly, exceedingly respectfully, and quite decently. He was quite grateful to Her Excellency Klavdia Petrovna for her virtuous concern with the orphan, for which God alone could reward her. He vaguely mentioned that, being extremely unwell, he was prevented from coming in person to bury his tenderly beloved and unfortunate daughter, and for that he placed all his hopes in Her Excellency's angelic goodness of soul. The three hundred roubles, as he further explained in the letter, were intended for the funeral and generally for the expenses incurred by the illness. If anything should be left of this sum, he most humbly and respectfully begged that it be employed for eternal commemoration for the repose of the soul of the departed Liza. The official who delivered the letter was unable to

explain more; it even followed from certain of his words that it was only Pavel Pavlovich's insistent request that had made him take it upon himself personally to deliver the packet to Her Excellency. Pogoreltsev almost took offense at the phrase "expenses incurred by the illness," and resolved, having set aside fifty roubles for the burial—since it was impossible to forbid a father to bury his own child—to return the remaining two hundred and fifty roubles to Mr. Trusotsky immediately. Klavdia Petrovna decided in the end to return, not the two hundred and fifty roubles, but the receipt from the cemetery church stating that this money had been received for the eternal commemoration of the soul of the departed maiden Elizaveta. The receipt was afterward given to Velchaninov, to be handed on immediately; he sent it by mail to the rooming house.

After the funeral, he disappeared from the country house. For two whole weeks he hung around the city without any purpose, alone, bumping into people in his pensiveness. At times he spent whole days lying stretched on his sofa, forgetful of the most ordinary things. The Pogoreltsevs sent many times asking him to come; he would promise and at once forget. Klavdia Petrovna even called on him personally, but did not find him at home. The same happened with his lawyer; and yet the lawyer had something to tell him: he had settled the lawsuit quite adroitly, and the adversaries had come to a peaceful agreement, with a very insignificant part of the disputed inheritance as compensation. It remained only to obtain the consent of Velchaninov himself. Finding him home at last, the lawyer was surprised at the extreme listlessness and indifference with which he, still recently so troublesome a client, heard him out.

The hottest days of July came, but Velchaninov was forgetful of time itself. The pain of his grief accumulated in his soul like a ripe abscess, and became clearer to him every moment in his tormentingly conscious thought. His chief suffering consisted in Liza's not having had time to know him and dying without knowing how tormentingly he loved her! The whole purpose of his life, which had flashed before him in such a joyful light, suddenly faded in eternal darkness. This purpose would precisely have consisted—he thought about it all the time now—in Liza's feeling his love upon her constantly, every day, every hour, and all her life. "No one has had or ever could have a higher purpose!" he pondered at times in gloomy rapture. "If there are other purposes, none can be holier than this one!" "By Liza's love," he dreamed, "my whole stinking and useless life would have been purified and redeemed; instead of myself, idle, depraved, and obsolete—I would have cherished for life a pure and beautiful being, and for this being everything would have been forgiven me, and I would have forgiven myself everything."

All these *conscious* thoughts came to him always inseparably from the vivid memory of the dead child, always close, and always striking his soul. He re-created for himself her pale little face, recalled its every expression; he remembered her in the coffin amid the flowers, and earlier, unconscious in fever, with open, fixed eyes. He remembered suddenly that, when she was already laid out on the table, he had noticed one of her fingers which, God knows why, had turned black during her illness; he had been so struck by it then, and had felt such pity for this poor little finger, that it had entered his mind right there and then, for the first time, to find Pavel Pavlovich at once and kill him—until that time he "had been as if insensible." Was it insulted pride that had tormented this child's little heart, or three months of suffering from a father who had suddenly exchanged love for hatred and insulted her with a shameful word, who had laughed at her fear, and had thrown her away, finally, to strangers? All this he pictured ceaselessly to himself, varying it in a thousand ways. "Do you know what Liza was for me?"—he suddenly recalled the drunken Trusotsky's exclamation, and he felt that this exclamation had no longer been clowning, but the truth, and there had been love in it. "How, then, could this monster be so cruel to a child he loved so, and is it probable?" But he hastened to drop this question each time, as if waving it away; there was something terrible in this question, something unbearable for him and—unresolved.

One day, and almost not remembering how himself, he wandered into the cemetery where Liza was buried and found her little grave. He had not been to the cemetery once since the funeral; he kept imagining that it would be too painful and had not dared to go. But, strangely, when he bent down to her little grave and kissed it, he suddenly felt better. It was a clear evening, the sun was setting; round about, near the graves, lush green grass was growing; not far away amid the eglantines, a bee buzzed; the flowers and wreaths left on Liza's little grave by the children and Klavdia Petrovna after the burial still lay there, half their leaves blown off. Even some sort of hope, for the first time in a long while, refreshed his heart. "What lightness!" he thought, feeling the silence of the cemetery and gazing at the clear, serene sky. A flood of some pure, untroubled faith in something filled his soul. "Liza has sent it to me, it's she talking to me," came the thought.

It was already getting quite dark as he went back home from the cemetery. Not too far from the cemetery gates, on the road, in a low wooden building, there was something like a chophouse or pub; through the open window clients could be seen sitting at tables. It suddenly seemed to him that one of them, placed just by the window, was—Pavel Pavlovich, and that he had also seen him and was peeking curiously at him through the window. He went on and soon heard someone coming after him; it was in fact Pavel Pavlovich running to catch up with him; it must have been the conciliatory expression on Velchaninov's face that had attracted and encouraged him as he looked out the window. Having overtaken him, he smiled timorously, but now it was not his former drunken smile; he was even not drunk at all.

"Good evening," he said.

"Good evening," Velchaninov replied.

XI PAVEL PAVLOVICH GETS MARRIED

Having replied with this "good evening," he became surprised at himself. It seemed terribly strange to him that he should meet this man now with no anger at all, and that there was something quite different in his feelings for him at that moment and even a sort of urge for something new.

"Such a pleasant evening," Pavel Pavlovich said, peeking into his eyes.

"You haven't left yet?" Velchaninov said, as if he were not asking but merely pondering, and continued to walk.

"I had a slow time of it, but—I got the post, sir, with a promotion. I'll be leaving for certain the day after tomorrow."

"You got the post?" he did ask this time.

"And why not, sir?" Pavel Pavlovich's face suddenly twisted.

"I said it just..." Velchaninov dodged and, frowning, looked at Pavel Pavlovich out of the corner of his eye. To his surprise, the clothing, the hat with crape, and the whole appearance of Mr. Trusotsky were incomparably more decent than two weeks before. "Why was he sitting in that pub?" he kept thinking.

"I was meaning to tell you, Alexei Ivanovich, about another joy of mine," Pavel Pavlovich began again.

"Joy?"

"I'm getting married, sir."

"What?"

"Joy follows grief, sir, it's always so in life. Alexei Ivanovich, sir, I'd like very much... but—I don't know, maybe you're in a hurry now, because you look as if..."

"Yes, I'm in a hurry and... yes, I'm not well."

He suddenly wanted terribly to get away; the readiness for some new feeling instantly vanished.

"And I would have liked, sir..."

Pavel Pavlovich did not finish saying what he would have liked; Velchaninov kept silent.

"Afterward, then, sir, if only we meet..."

"Yes, yes, afterward, afterward," Velchaninov muttered rapidly, not looking at him or stopping. They were silent for another minute; Pavel Pavlovich went on walking beside him.

"In that case, good-bye, sir," he spoke finally. "Good-bye. I wish you..."

Velchaninov returned home thoroughly upset again. The encounter with "this man" was too much for him. Going to bed, he thought again: "Why was he near the cemetery?"

The next morning he made up his mind; sympathy from anyone, even the Pogoreltsevs, was much too heavy for him now. But they were so worried about him that he absolutely had to go. He suddenly imagined that he would be very embarrassed for some reason on first meeting them. "To go or not to go?" he thought, hurrying to finish his breakfast, when suddenly, to his extreme amazement, Pavel Pavlovich walked in.

Despite yesterday's encounter, Velchaninov could never have imagined that this man might someday call on him again, and he was so taken aback that he stared at him without knowing what to say. But Pavel Pavlovich took things in hand, greeted him, and sat down in the same chair he had sat in three weeks earlier during his last visit. Velchaninov suddenly remembered that visit especially vividly. Uneasily and with disgust, he looked at his visitor.

"Surprised, sir?" Pavel Pavlovich began, divining Velchaninov's gaze.

Generally he seemed much more casual than the day before, and at the same time it could be seen that his timidity was greater. His external appearance was especially curious. Mr. Trusotsky was dressed not only decently but stylishly—in a light summer jacket, tight-fitting, light-colored trousers, a light-colored waistcoat; gloves, a gold lorgnette, which for some reason suddenly appeared, linen—all impeccable; he even smelled of perfume. There was in his whole figure something at once ridiculous and suggestive of some strange and unpleasant thought.

"Of course, Alexei Ivanovich," he went on, cringing, "I surprised you by coming, sir, and—I can feel it, sir. But between people, so I think, sir, there always remains—and, in my opinion, must remain—something higher, don't you think, sir? That is, higher with regard to all conventions and even the very unpleasantnesses that may come of it... don't you think, sir?"

"Pavel Pavlovich, say it all quickly and without ceremony," Velchaninov frowned.

"In two words, sir," Pavel Pavlovich hurried, "I'm getting married and am presently going to my fiancée, right now. They're also in the country, sir. I wished to be granted the profound honor, so as to dare acquaint you with this family, sir, and I've come with an exceptional request" (Pavel Pavlovich humbly bowed his head), "to ask you to accompany me, sir..."

"Accompany you where?" Velchaninov goggled his eyes.

"To them, sir, that is, to their country house, sir. Forgive me, I'm speaking as if in a fever and may have become confused; but I'm so afraid you'll say no, sir..."

And he looked lamentably at Velchaninov.

"You want me to go with you now to your fiancée?" Velchaninov repeated, casting a quick glance over him and believing neither his ears nor his eyes.

"Yes, sir," Pavel Pavlovich suddenly grew terribly timid. "Don't be angry, Alexei Ivanovich, this isn't boldness, sir; I only beg you most humbly and exceptionally. I dreamed that you might perhaps not want to say no to me in this..."

"First of all, it's utterly impossible," Velchaninov squirmed uneasily.

"It's just my exceeding wish and nothing more, sir," the man went on imploring. "I also won't conceal that there is a reason as well, sir. But about this reason I would like to reveal only later, sir, and now I only beg exceptionally..."

And he even got up from his chair out of deference.

"But in any case it's impossible, you must agree..." Velchaninov also got up from his place.

"It's very possible, Alexei Ivanovich, sir—I planned to get you acquainted at the same time, as a friend, sir; and secondly, you're acquainted there without that, sir; it's to Zakhlebinin's country house. State councillor Zakhlebinin, sir."

"What's that?" Velchaninov cried out. It was the same state councillor he had been looking for, about a month ago, and had been unable to catch at home, who had acted, as it turned out, in favor of the adverse party in his lawsuit.

"Why, yes, of course," Pavel Pavlovich smiled, as if encouraged by Velchaninov's extreme astonishment, "the same one, you remember, you were walking along and talking with, while I watched you and stood on the other side; I was waiting then to approach him after you. Some twenty years back we even served together, sir, but at the time when I wanted to approach after you, sir, I still didn't have this thought. It's only now that it came suddenly, about a week ago, sir."

"But, listen, it seems this is quite a respectable family?" Velchaninov was naively surprised.

"So what, sir, if they're respectable?" Pavel Pavlovich's face twisted.

"No, naturally, I don't mean that... but as far as I could tell, having been there..."

"They remember, they remember, sir, that you were," Pavel Pavlovich picked up joyfully, "only you couldn't see the family then, sir; and he remembers and respects you. I spoke about you deferentially with them."

"But how can it be, if you've been a widower for only three months?"¹⁰

"Oh, the wedding's not right now, sir; the wedding's in nine or ten months, so that exactly a year of mourning will have gone by, sir. Believe me, it's all just fine, sir. First of all, Fedosei Petrovich has known me even since my youngest years, he knew my late spouse, how I lived, and what my reputation is, sir, and, finally, I have a fortune, and here also I've now obtained a post and a promotion—so all this carries weight, sir."

"It's his daughter, then?"

"I'll tell you all about it in detail, sir," Pavel Pavlovich hunched himself up pleasantly, "allow me to light a cigarette. Besides, you'll see for yourself today. First of all, such men of affairs as Fedosei Petrovich are sometimes highly valued in the service here in Petersburg, if they manage to attract attention, sir. But apart from the salary and the rest—supplements, premiums, emoluments, dinner allowances, or else one-time bonuses, sir—there's nothing, that is, nothing substantial, sir, that would constitute a capital. They live well, but it's impossible to save, what with the family, sir. Consider for yourself: Fedosei Petrovich has eight girls, and only one little son. If he were to die now—all that's left is a skimpy pension, sir. And there are eight girls—no, consider, just consider, sir: if it's a pair of shoes for each of them, that already comes to something! Of the eight girls, five are already marriageable, sir,¹¹ the eldest is twenty-four—the loveliest girl, you'll see for yourself, sir!), and the sixth one is fifteen, she's still in school. For the five older girls suitors must be found, which ought if possible to be done well ahead of time, so the father has to take them out, sir—and what is the cost of that, may I ask, sir? And suddenly I appear, the first suitor in their home, sir, and known to them beforehand, that is, in the sense that I do actually have a fortune. Well, there you have it, sir."

Pavel Pavlovich explained with rapture.

"You proposed to the oldest one?"

"N-no, I... not to the oldest one; I proposed to the sixth one, the one that's still studying in school."

"What?" Velchaninov grinned inadvertently. "But you say she's fifteen years old!"

"Fifteen now, sir; but in nine months she'll be sixteen, sixteen years and three months, sir, so why not? And since for the moment it's all inappropriate, nothing's been made public yet, only with the parents... Believe me, it's all just fine, sir!"

"So it hasn't been decided yet?"

"No, it's decided, everything's decided. Believe me, it's all just fine, sir."

"And she knows?"

"That is, it's only for appearance, for propriety's sake, that it hasn't been talked about, as it were; but how could she not know, sir?" Pavel Pavlovich narrowed his eyes pleasantly. "So, then, will you make me a happy man, Alexei Ivanovich?" he concluded, terribly timidly.

"But what should I go there for? However," he added hastily, "since I'm not going in any case, don't offer me any reasons."

"Alexei Ivanovich..."

"But do you think I can really sit down beside you and go!"

A disgusted and hostile feeling came back to him again after the momentary diversion of Pavel Pavlovich's babble about his fiancée. Another minute, it seemed, and he would chase him out altogether. He was even angry with himself for something.

"Sit down, Alexei Ivanovich, sit down beside me and you won't regret it!" Pavel Pavlovich entreated in a soulful voice. "No, no, no!" he waved his hands, catching Velchaninov's impatient and resolute gesture, "Alexei Ivanovich, Alexei Ivanovich, don't decide yet, sir! I see that you have perhaps misunderstood me: I realize only too well that I am not friends with you, nor you with me, sir; I'm not so absurd as not to realize that, sir. And that this present favor I am begging of you doesn't count for anything in the future. And I myself will leave completely the day after tomorrow, sir—altogether, sir, so it's as if there was nothing. Let this day be only one occasion, sir. I came to you basing my hopes on the nobility of certain special feelings of your heart, Alexei Ivanovich—precisely on those feelings that may have been stirred in your heart recently, sir... I believe I'm speaking clearly, sir—or not quite?"

Pavel Pavlovich's agitation had grown in the extreme. Velchaninov looked at him strangely.

"You're begging for some favor on my part," he asked, pondering, "and being terribly insistent—I find that suspicious; I want to know more."

"The whole favor consists only in your coming with me. And afterward, when we've come back, I'll lay out everything before you as if at confession. Trust me, Alexei Ivanovich!"

But Velchaninov still kept refusing, and the more stubbornly as he felt in himself a certain heavy, spiteful thought. This wicked thought had already long been stirring in him, from the very beginning, when Pavel Pavlovich had only just announced about his fiancée: whether from simple curiosity, or some still entirely vague inclination, he felt drawn—to agree. And the more drawn he was, the more he defended himself. He was sitting, leaning on his hand, and reflecting. Pavel Pavlovich fussed about and implored him.

"All right, I'll go," he suddenly agreed uneasily and almost anxiously, getting up from his place. Pavel Pavlovich was boundlessly overjoyed.

"No, Alexei Ivanovich, you get yourself dressed up now," he fussed joyfully around Velchaninov, who was getting dressed, "nicely, the way you know how."

"Strange man," Velchaninov thought to himself, "why is he letting himself in for it?"

"And this is not the only favor I expect from you, Alexei Ivanovich, sir. Since you've given your consent, also be my guide, sir."

"Meaning what?"

"Meaning that there's a big question, sir: about the crape, sir? What's more appropriate: to take it off, or to keep the crape?"

"As you like."

"No, I want your decision—that is, if you were wearing crape, sir? My own thought was that if I keep it, it will point to a constancy of feelings, sir, and so will be a flattering recommendation."

"Take it off, naturally."

"Naturally, you say?" Pavel Pavlovich pondered. "No, I'd rather keep it, sir..."

"As you like."—"Anyhow he doesn't trust me, that's good," thought Velchaninov.

They went out; Pavel Pavlovich contemplated the dressed-up Velchaninov with satisfaction; it even seemed as if more respect and importance showed in his face. Velchaninov marveled at him and still more at himself. By the gate an excellent carriage stood waiting for them.

"And you've got a carriage all ready? So you were sure I'd go?"

"I hired the carriage for myself, sir, but I was almost certain you'd agree to go," Pavel Pavlovich responded with the look of a perfectly happy man.

"Eh, Pavel Pavlovich," Velchaninov laughed somehow vexedly when they were already settled and starting out, "aren't you a bit too sure of me?"

"But it's not for you, Alexei Ivanovich, it's not for you to tell me I'm a fool on account of that?" Pavel Pavlovich replied in a firm and soulful voice.

"And Liza?" thought Velchaninov, and at once dropped the thought, as if fearing some blasphemy. And suddenly he seemed so paltry to himself, so insignificant at that moment; the thought that was tempting him seemed such a small, such a nasty little thought... and he wanted at all costs to drop everything again and get out of the carriage right then, even if he had to beat Pavel Pavlovich because of it. But the man started to speak and the temptation again gripped his heart.

"Alexei Ivanovich, do you know how to judge precious stones, sir?"

"What precious stones?"

"Diamonds, sir."

"I do."

"I'd like to bring a little present. Guide me: should I do it, or not?"

"In my opinion, you shouldn't."

"But I'd very much like to, sir," Pavel Pavlovich squirmed, "only what should I buy, sir? A whole set—that is, brooch, earrings, and bracelet—or just one thing?"

"How much do you want to spend?"

"Oh, some four or five hundred roubles, sir."

"Oof!"

"Is it too much?" Pavel Pavlovich roused himself.

"Buy just a bracelet, for a hundred roubles."

Pavel Pavlovich was even upset. He wanted terribly to spend more and buy the "whole" set. He insisted. They stopped at a store. It ended, however, with their buying only a bracelet, and not the one Pavel Pavlovich wanted, but one pointed out by Velchaninov. Pavel Pavlovich wanted to take both. When the shopkeeper, after asking a hundred and seventy-five roubles for the bracelet, went down to a hundred and fifty—he was even vexed; it would have been a pleasure for him to spend two hundred, had he been asked to, so much did he want to spend more.

"Never mind my being in such a hurry with presents," he poured himself out in rapture as they drove on, "it's not high society, it's simple there, sir. Innocence likes little presents," he smiled slyly and merrily. "You grinned just now, Alexei Ivanovich, at the mention of fifteen years; but that was just what hit me on the head—precisely that she still goes to school, with a little book bag in her hand, with notebooks and little pens, heh, heh! It was the little book bag that captivated my thoughts! In fact, it's for that innocence, Alexei Ivanovich. For me it's not so much a matter of the beauty of her face, but that innocence, sir. She giggles there in a corner with a girlfriend, and how they laugh, and my God! And over what, sir: all that laughter is because the kitty jumped from the chest onto the bed and curled up... It really smells of fresh apples there, sir! Shouldn't I take the crape off?"

"As you like."

"I will!" He took off his hat, tore the crape from it, and threw it out on the road. Velchaninov saw the brightest hope shinning in his face as he put his hat back on his bald head.

"But can he in fact be like this?" he thought, now genuinely angry. "Can it be that there's no *trick* in his inviting me? Can he in fact be counting on my nobility?" he went on, almost offended by the last supposition. "What is he, a buffoon, a fool, or an 'eternal husband'? But this is impossible, finally!..."

XII AT THE ZAKHLEBININS'

The Zakhlebinins were actually a "very respectable family," as Velchaninov had put it earlier, and Zakhlebinin himself was quite a solid official and a visible one. Everything that Pavel Pavlovich had said about their income was also true: "They live well, it seems, but if the man were to die, there would be nothing left."

Old Zakhlebinin met Velchaninov splendidly and amicably, and from a former "enemy" turned entirely into a friend.

"My congratulations, it's better this way," he began speaking with a pleasant and dignified air. "I myself insisted on a peaceful settlement, and Pyotr Karlovich" (Velchaninov's lawyer) "is pure gold in that regard. So then? You'll get about sixty thousand and without any fuss, without temporizing, without quarrels. Otherwise the case might have dragged on for three years!"

Velchaninov was introduced at once to Mme. Zakhlebinin, a rather spread-out old lady, with a simplish and tired face. The girls also began sailing out, singly or in pairs. But far too many girls appeared; gradually some ten or twelve of them assembled—Velchaninov even lost count; some came in, others left. But among them were many friends from neighboring houses. The Zakhlebinins' country place—a big wooden house, in some unknown but fanciful taste, added on to at various times—enjoyed the use of a big garden. But three or four other houses gave onto this garden from different sides, so that this big garden served as a common one, which naturally contributed to the closeness between the girls and their summer neighbors. From the first words of the conversation, Velchaninov noticed that he had been expected there and that his arrival in the quality of Pavel Pavlovich's friend, wishing to become acquainted, had been all but solemnly announced. His keen, experienced eye in such matters soon discerned something even peculiar here: from the much too amiable reception of the parents, from a certain peculiar look about the girls and their dress (though, incidentally, it was a feast day), the suspicion flashed in him that Pavel Pavlovich had tricked him, and might very well have suggested here, naturally without putting it directly into words, something like the notion of him as a bored bachelor, of "good society," with a fortune, who might very, very well suddenly decide, at last, to "put an end to it" and settle down—"the more so as he has also received an inheritance." It seemed that the oldest Mlle. Zakhlebinin, Katerina Fedoseevna, the one who was twenty-four and of whom Pavel Pavlovich had spoken as a lovely person, had been more or less tuned to this note. She stood out among her sisters especially by her attire and some sort of original arrangement of her fluffy hair. The sisters and all the other girls looked as if they, too, already knew firmly that Velchaninov was becoming acquainted "on account of Katya" and had come to "have a look" at her. Their glances and even certain phrases that flashed by inadvertently in the course of the day, later confirmed him in this surmise. Katerina Fedoseevna was a tall blonde, plump to the point of luxuriousness, with an extremely sweet face, of an apparently quiet and unenterprising, even drowsy, character. "Strange that such a girl has stayed like this so long," Velchaninov thought involuntarily, studying her with pleasure. "Granted she has no dowry and will soon spread out altogether, but meanwhile there are so many who love that..." The rest of the sisters were none too bad either, and among the girlfriends there flashed several amusing and even pretty little faces. This began to amuse him; and anyhow he had come with special thoughts.

Nadezhda Fedoseevna, the sixth one, the schoolgirl and supposed fiancée of Pavel Pavlovich, made them wait. Velchaninov waited for her with impatience, marveling at himself and chuckling inwardly. Finally she appeared, and not without effect, accompanied by a pert and sharp girlfriend, Marya Nikitishna, a brunette with a laughing face, of whom, as it turned out at once, Pavel Pavlovich was extremely afraid. This Marya Nikitishna, already a girl of twenty-three, a barterer and even a wit, was governess of the little children in the family of some neighbors and acquaintances, and had long been considered like one of their own at the Zakhlebinins', where the girls valued her terribly. It was evident that she was also especially necessary now for Nadya. From the first glance, Velchaninov could see that the girls, and even the girlfriends, were all against Pavel Pavlovich, while from the second moment after Nadya's appearance, he decided that she *hated* him. He also noticed that Pavel Pavlovich did not perceive it at all, or else did not wish to perceive it. Indisputably, Nadya was better than all her sisters—a small brunette with the air of a wild thing and the boldness of a nihilist; a thievish little demon with fiery eyes, a lovely, though often wicked, smile, amazing lips and teeth, slim, slender, with a nascent thought in the ardent expression of her face, at the same time still quite childish. Her fifteen years spoke in her every step, her every word. It turned out later that Pavel Pavlovich had actually seen her for the first time with an oilcloth book bag in her hand, but now she no longer carried it.

The giving of the bracelet was a complete failure and even produced a disagreeable impression. Pavel Pavlovich, as soon as he saw his fiancée come in, approached her at once with a grin. He offered his gift under the pretext of "the agreeable pleasure felt by him the previous time on the occasion of the agreeable romance sung by Nadezhda Fedoseevna at the piano..." He became flustered, did not finish, and stood like a lost man, reaching out and thrusting into Nadezhda Fedoseevna's hand the case with the bracelet, while she, not wanting to take it, and blushing with shame and wrath, kept putting her hands behind her back. She boldly turned to her mother, whose face expressed embarrassment, and said loudly:

"I don't want to take it, *Maman!*"

"Take it and say thank you," the father said with calm sternness, but he, too, was displeased. "Unnecessary, unnecessary!" he muttered didactically to Pavel Pavlovich. Nadya, since there was nothing to be done, took the case and, lowering her eyes, curtsied as little girls do, that is, she suddenly plopped down and suddenly bounced up at once, as if on a spring. One of the sisters came over to look, and Nadya gave her the case, still unopened, thereby showing that she herself did not even want to look. The bracelet was taken out and handed around; but they all looked at it silently, and some even mockingly. Only the mother murmured that it was a very nice bracelet. Pavel Pavlovich was ready to fall through the earth.

Velchaninov came to the rescue.

He suddenly started talking, loudly and eagerly, seizing the first thought that came to him, and before five minutes

had passed, he already held the attention of everyone in the drawing room. He had learned magnificently the art of babbling in society, that is, the art of appearing perfectly simple-hearted and at the same time making it seem that he took his listeners for people as simple-hearted as himself. With extreme naturalness he could pretend, when necessary, to be the merriest and happiest of men. He knew how to place very deftly a witty and provocative phrase, a merry hint, a funny quip, and to do it as if quite inadvertently, as if without noticing—whereas the witticism, the quip, and the conversation itself had been prepared long ago, learned, and put to use more than once. But at the present moment his art was seconded by nature itself: he felt that he was in the spirit, that something was drawing him; he felt in himself a complete and triumphant assurance that in a few moments all these eyes would be turned on him, that all these people would be listening only to him, talking only to him, laughing only at what he said. And indeed laughter was soon heard, others gradually mixed in the conversation—he had perfect command of the skill of drawing others into a conversation—and three or four voices could already be heard talking at once. The dull and tired face of Mrs. Zakhlebinin lit up almost with joy; the same with Katerina Fedoseevna, who listened and looked as if mesmerized. Scowling, Nadya studied him keenly; one could note that she had been prejudiced against him. This fired Velchaninov up still more. The “wicked” Marya Nikitishna did manage to slip into the conversation a rather pointed barb on his account; she invented and insisted that Pavel Pavlovich had recommended him there the day before as a childhood friend of his, thus adding—and hinting at it clearly—a whole seven extra years to his age. Yet the wicked Marya Nikitishna liked him, too. Pavel Pavlovich was decidedly taken aback. He had, of course, some notion of the resources his friend possessed, and in the beginning was even glad of his success, giggling along and mixing in the conversation himself; but for some reason he gradually began to lapse as if into reflection, even, finally, into despondency, which showed clearly on his alarmed physiognomy.

“Well, you’re the sort of guest who doesn’t need to be entertained,” old Zakhlebinin cheerily decided at last, getting up from his chair to go to his room upstairs, where, despite the feast day, he had a few business papers ready for going over, “and, imagine, I considered you the gloomiest hypochondriac of all our young people. How wrong one can be!”

In the drawing room stood a grand piano; Velchaninov asked who studied music, and suddenly turned to Nadya.

“You sing, it seems?”

“Who told you so?” Nadya snapped.

“Pavel Pavlovich said so earlier.”

“Not so; I only sing for a joke; I have no voice.”

“I have no voice either, but I do sing.”

“So you’ll sing for us? Well, then I’ll sing for you, too,” Nadya flashed her eyes, “only not now, but after dinner. I can’t stand music,” she added, “I’m sick of this piano; all this playing and singing here from morning till night—Katya’s more than enough herself.”

Velchaninov seized on the phrase at once, and it turned out that Katerina Fedoseevna was the only one of them all who seriously studied piano. He immediately turned to her with a request to play. Everyone was evidently pleased that he had turned to Katya, and *Maman* even blushed with satisfaction. Katerina Fedoseevna rose, smiling, and went to the grand piano, but suddenly, unexpectedly for herself, blushed all over, and suddenly felt terribly ashamed that, big as she was, already twenty-four years old, and so plump, here she was blushing like a little girl—and all this was written on her face as she sat down to play. She played something by Haydn, and played it very accurately, though without expression; but she turned shy. When she finished, Velchaninov started praising terribly, not her but Haydn, and especially the little piece she had played—and she was obviously so pleased, she listened so gratefully and happily to this praise not of herself but of Haydn, that Velchaninov involuntarily looked at her more gently and attentively. “Eh, aren’t you a nice one?” shone in his eyes—and everyone understood this glance as if at once, especially Katerina Fedoseevna herself.

“A nice garden you’ve got,” he suddenly addressed them all, looking through the glass door to the balcony. “You know, let’s all go out to the garden!”

“Let’s go, let’s go!” came joyful squeals—just as if he had guessed the main general wish.

They were in the garden until dinner. Mrs. Zakhlebinin, who had long been wanting to sleep, also could not help herself and went out with everyone else, but sensibly stayed to sit and rest on the balcony, where she dozed off at once. In the garden, the mutual relations between Velchaninov and all the girls became friendlier still. He noticed that two or three very young men joined them from neighboring houses; one was a university student, another merely a high school boy. These two sprang over at once each to *his own* girl, and it was evident that they had come for their sake; the third “young man,” a very gloomy and ruffled twenty-year-old boy in enormous blue spectacles, began hurriedly and frowningly exchanging whispers with Marya Nikitishna and Nadya. He sternly looked Velchaninov over and seemed to consider it his duty to treat him with extraordinary disdain. Some girls suggested that they go ahead and start playing. To Velchaninov’s question about what games they played, they replied that they played all games, including fox and hounds, but that in the evening they would play proverbs, that is, where everybody sits down and one person stands apart for a while; all those sitting down choose a proverb, for instance: “Slow and steady wins the race,” and when the person is called back, each one in turn has to prepare and tell him a sentence. The first one has to give a sentence containing the word “slow,” the second a sentence containing the word “steady,” and so on. And the person has to pick out all these words and from them guess the proverb.

“It must be great fun,” observed Velchaninov.

“Oh, no, it’s quite boring,” two or three voices answered at once.

“Or else we play theater,” Nadya observed, addressing him. “See that big tree with the bench around it? There, behind the tree, is like backstage, the actors sit there—say, a king, a queen, a princess, a young man—whatever anyone likes; each one comes out whenever he has a mind to and says whatever occurs to him, and something or other comes out.”

“But how nice!” Velchaninov praised once more.

“Oh, no, it’s quite boring! Each time it comes out as fun in the beginning, but by the end it turns senseless each time, because nobody knows how to finish; though maybe with you it would be more amusing. And we thought you were Pavel Pavlovich’s friend, but it turns out he was simply boasting. I’m very glad you came... owing to a certain circumstance,” she looked very seriously and meaningfully at Velchaninov and at once stepped over beside Marya Nikitishna.

"There'll be a game of proverbs this evening," one girlfriend, whom he had scarcely noticed till then and had not yet exchanged a word with, whispered confidentially to Velchaninov, "and this evening everybody will laugh at Pavel Pavlovich, so you must, too."

"Ah, how nice of you to come, we're so bored here otherwise," another girlfriend said to him amiably, one he had not yet noticed at all, and who appeared from God knows where, a little redhead with freckles, her face flushed in a terribly funny way from walking and the heat.

Pavel Pavlovich's uneasiness grew greater and greater. In the garden, toward the end, Velchaninov succeeded completely in becoming close with Nadya; she no longer peered at him scowlingly as earlier and seemed to have set aside the idea of studying him more closely, but laughed, jumped, squealed, and even seized him by the hand once or twice; she was terribly happy, and went on paying not the slightest attention to Pavel Pavlovich, as if not noticing him. Velchaninov was convinced that there existed a positive conspiracy against Pavel Pavlovich; Nadya and a crowd of girls would draw Velchaninov to one side, while other girlfriends under various pretexts lured Pavel Pavlovich to the other; but he would tear away and at once run headlong straight to them—that is, to Velchaninov and Nadya—and suddenly thrust his bald and anxiously eavesdropping head between them. Toward the end, he was not even embarrassed; the naivete of his gestures and movements was at times astonishing. Velchaninov could not help paying special attention once again to Katerina Fedoseevna; by then it had, of course, become clear to her that he had come not at all for her sake and was already much too interested in Nadya; but her face was as sweet and good-natured as before. She seemed to be happy in the fact alone that she, too, was near them and could listen to what the new visitor was saying; she herself, poor dear, had never known how to mix adroitly in conversation.

"And how nice your sister Katerina Fedoseevna is!" Velchaninov suddenly said to Nadya on the quiet.

"Katya? Why, there couldn't be a kinder soul than hers! She's an angel for us all, I'm in love with her," the girl replied rapturously.

Finally, at five o'clock, dinner was served, and it was also very noticeable that the dinner had been prepared not in the usual way, but especially for the visitor. There were two or three dishes obviously in addition to what was usually served, rather sophisticated ones, and one of them something altogether unfamiliar, so that no one could even put a name to it. Besides the usual table wines, a bottle of Tokay also appeared, obviously thought up for the visitor; toward the end of dinner champagne was served for some reason. Old Zakhlebinin, having drunk one glass too many, was in the most sunny-minded mood and was ready to laugh at everything Velchaninov said. The end was that Pavel Pavlovich finally could not help himself: carried away by the competition, he also suddenly decided to utter some pun, and so he did: from the end of the table where he sat by Mme. Zakhlebinin, the loud laughter of overjoyed girls suddenly came.

"Papa, Papa! Pavel Pavlovich has also made a pun," two of the middle Zakhlebinin girls cried with one voice, "he says we're 'young misses one always misses ...'"

"Ah, so he's punning, too? Well, what pun has he made?" the old man responded in a solemn voice, turning patronizingly to Pavel Pavlovich and smiling beforehand at the anticipated pun.

"But that's what he said, that we're 'young misses one always misses.'"

"Y-yes! Well, so what?" the old man still did not understand and smiled still more good-naturedly in anticipation.

"Oh, Papa, what's the matter with you, you don't understand! It's misses and then misses; misses is the same as misses, misses one always misses..."

"Ahhh!" the perplexed old man drew out. "Hm! Well, he'll do better next time!" and the old man laughed gaily.

"Pavel Pavlovich, one can't have all perfections at once!" Marya Nikitishna taunted him loudly. "Ah, my God, he's choking on a bone!" she exclaimed, jumping up from her chair.

Turmoil even ensued, but that was just what Marya Nikitishna wanted. Pavel Pavlovich had only swallowed his wine the wrong way, after grabbing it to conceal his embarrassment, but Marya Nikitishna insisted and swore up and down that it was "a fishbone, that she'd seen it herself, and one can die from that."

"Thump him on the back!" someone shouted.

"In fact, that's the best thing!" Zakhlebinin loudly approved, but volunteers had already turned up: Marya Nikitishna, the redheaded girlfriend (also invited for dinner), and, finally, the terribly frightened mother of the family in person—they all wanted to thump Pavel Pavlovich on the back. Pavel Pavlovich jumped up from the table to evade them and spent a whole minute insisting that it was merely wine that had gone down the wrong way, and that the coughing would soon pass—before they finally figured out that it was all Marya Nikitishna's pranks.

"Well, aren't you the little mischief, though!..." Mme. Zakhlebinin observed sternly to Marya Nikitishna—but was at once unable to help herself and burst into such laughter as rarely happened with her, which also produced an effect of a sort. After dinner they all went out to the balcony to have coffee.

"Such fine days we're having!" the old man benevolently praised nature, looking out at the garden with pleasure. "Only we could use a little rain... Well, I'll go and rest. Have fun, have fun, God bless you! And you have fun, too!" He slapped Pavel Pavlovich on the shoulder as he went out.

When everyone had gone down to the garden again, Pavel Pavlovich suddenly rushed over to Velchaninov and tugged him by the sleeve.

"For one moment, sir," he whispered impatiently.

They walked to a solitary side path in the garden.

"No, excuse me this time, sir, no, this time I won't let you..." he whispered, spluttering fiercely and grabbing Velchaninov's sleeve.

"What? How's that?" Velchaninov asked, making big eyes. Pavel Pavlovich stood silently gazing at him, moving his lips, and smiled fiercely.

"Where have you gone? Where are you? Everything's ready!" the girls' calls and impatient voices were heard. Velchaninov shrugged and went back to the company. Pavel Pavlovich went running after him.

"I bet he asked you for a handkerchief," Marya Nikitishna said, "last time he also forgot it."

"He eternally forgets!" a middle Zakhlebinin girl picked up.

"Forgot his handkerchief! Pavel Pavlovich forgot his handkerchief! *Maman*, Pavel Pavlovich forgot his handkerchief again, *Maman*, Pavel Pavlovich has caught cold again!" voices came.

"Why doesn't he say so? Pavel Pavlovich, you are so fastidious!" Mme. Zakhlebinin drawled in a singsong voice. "It's dangerous to joke with a cold; I'll send you a handkerchief right away. And why is it he's always catching cold!" she added as she left, glad of an occasion to go back to the house.

"I have two handkerchiefs, and no cold, ma'am," Pavel Pavlovich called after her, but she must not have understood, and a minute later, as Pavel Pavlovich was trotting after everyone, trying to keep closer to Velchaninov and Nadya, a maid came puffing up to him and indeed brought him a handkerchief.

"Let's play, let's play, let's play proverbs!" shouts came from all sides, as if they expected God knows what from their "proverbs."

They chose a place and sat down on benches; it fell to Marya Nikitishna to guess; they demanded that she go as far away as possible and not eavesdrop; in her absence a proverb was chosen and the words were distributed. Marya Nikitishna came back and guessed it at once. The proverb was: "Dreadful the dream, but God is merciful."

Marya Nikitishna was followed by the ruffled young man in blue spectacles. Of him still greater precautions were demanded—that he stand by the gazebo and turn his face fully toward the fence. The gloomy young man did his duty with disdain and even seemed to feel a certain moral humiliation. When he was called back, he could not guess anything, went around to each person, listening twice to what they told him, spent a long time gloomily reflecting, but nothing came of it. He was put to shame. The proverb was: "Prayer to God and service to the tsar are never in vain."

"Besides, it's a disgusting proverb!" the wounded youth grumbled indignantly, retreating to his place.

"Ah, how boring!" voices were heard.

Velchaninov went; he was hidden farther away than the others; he also failed to guess.

"Ah, how boring!" still more voices were heard.

"Well, now I'll go," said Nadya.

"No, no, now Pavel Pavlovich will go, it's Pavel Pavlovich's turn," they all shouted and livened up a bit.

Pavel Pavlovich was taken right to the fence, to the corner, and placed facing it, and to keep him from turning around, the little redhead was set to watch him. Pavel Pavlovich, already cheered up and almost merry again, piously intended to do his duty and stood like a stump staring at the fence, not daring to turn around. The little redhead kept watch some twenty paces behind him, closer to the company, by the gazebo, exchanging excited winks with the other girls; one could see that they were all expecting something, even with a certain anxiousness; something was being prepared. Suddenly the little redhead waved her arms from behind the gazebo. That instant they all jumped up and rushed off somewhere at breakneck speed.

"You run, too!" ten voices whispered to Velchaninov, all but horrified that he was not running.

"What is it? What's happened?" he kept asking, hurrying after them all.

"Quiet, don't shout! Let him stand there and stare at the fence while we all run away. Here's Nastya running, too!"

The little redhead (Nastya) was running headlong as if God knows what had happened, and waving her arms. They all came finally, beyond the pond, to a completely different end of the garden. When Velchaninov got there, he saw that Katerina Fedoseevna was having a big argument with all the girls and especially with Nadya and Marya Nikitishna.

"Katya, darling, don't be angry!" Nadya was kissing her.

"All right, I won't tell Mama, but I shall leave myself, because this is not nice at all. What must the poor man be feeling there by the fence?"

She left out of pity, but all the rest remained as implacable and pitiless as before. It was sternly demanded of Velchaninov that, when Pavel Pavlovich came back, he also pay no attention to him, as if nothing had happened. "And let's all play fox and hounds!" the little redhead cried out rapturously.

Pavel Pavlovich rejoined the company only after at least a quarter of an hour. He must have spent two thirds of that time standing at the fence. Fox and hounds was in full swing and succeeded excellently—everyone shouted and had fun. Mad with rage, Pavel Pavlovich sprang straight up to Velchaninov and again grabbed him by the sleeve.

"For one little moment, sir!"

"Oh, Lord, what's with him and his little moments!"

"Asking for a handkerchief again," the cry came after them.

"Well, this time it's you, sir; here it's you now, sir, you are the cause of it!" Pavel Pavlovich's teeth even chattered as he articulated this.

Velchaninov interrupted him and peaceably advised him to be more cheerful, or else he would be teased to death: "They tease you because you're angry while everyone else is having fun." To his amazement, Pavel Pavlovich was terribly struck by his words and advice; he at once became quiet, even to the point of returning to the company like a guilty man and obediently taking part in the general games; for some time afterward they did not bother him and played with him like anyone else—and before half an hour had gone by, he was almost cheerful again. In all the games, he engaged himself as a partner, when need be, predominantly with the treacherous little redhead or one of the Zakhlebinin sisters. But Velchaninov noticed, to his still greater amazement, that Pavel Pavlovich hardly dared even once to address Nadya, though he ceaselessly fussed around her or near her; at least he accepted the position of one unnoticed and scorned by her as if it were proper, natural. But in the end a prank was again played on him even so.

The game was hide-and-seek. The person hiding, incidentally, had the right to change his place within the whole area in which he was allowed to hide. Pavel Pavlovich, who had managed to hide by getting himself into a thick bush, suddenly decided to change his place and run into the house. There was shouting, he was seen; he hastily sneaked upstairs, having in mind a little place behind a chest of drawers where he wanted to hide. But the little redhead flew up after him, tiptoed stealthily to the door, and snapped the lock. As before, everyone at once stopped playing and again ran beyond the pond to the other end of the garden. About ten minutes later, Pavel Pavlovich, sensing that no one was looking for him, peeked out the window. No one was there. He did not dare shout lest he awaken the parents; the maid and the serving girl had been given strict orders not to come or respond to Pavel Pavlovich's call. Katerina Fedoseevna

could have opened the door for him, but she, having returned to her room, sat down in reverie and unexpectedly fell asleep herself. He sat like that for about an hour. At last, girls began to appear in twos and threes, passing by as if inadvertently.

"Pavel Pavlovich, why don't you join us? Ah, it's such fun there! We're playing theater. Alexei Ivanovich had the role of the 'young man.'"

"Pavel Pavlovich, why don't you join us, it's you one always misses!" other young misses observed, passing by.

"Who is it, again, that one always misses?" suddenly came the voice of Mme. Zakhlebinin, who had just woken up and decided finally to take a stroll in the garden and watch the "children's" games while waiting for tea.

"It's Pavel Pavlovich there." She was shown the window through which peeked, with a distorted smile, pale with anger, the face of Pavel Pavlovich.

"The man would just rather sit there alone, while others are having such fun!" the mother of the family shook her head.

Meanwhile Velchaninov had the honor, finally, of receiving from Nadya an explanation of her words earlier about being "glad he had come owing to a certain circumstance." The explanation took place in a solitary alley. Marya Nikitishna purposely summoned Velchaninov, who had participated in some of the games and was already beginning to languish greatly, and brought him to this alley, where she left him alone with Nadya.

"I'm perfectly convinced," she rattled out in a bold and quick patter, "that you are not at all such a friend of Pavel Pavlovich's as he boasted you were. I calculate that you alone can render me an extremely important service; here is today's nasty bracelet," she took the case from her pocket, "I humbly beg you to return it to him immediately, because I myself will not speak to him ever or for anything for the rest of my life. Anyhow, you may tell him so on my behalf and add that henceforth he dare not thrust his presents at me. The rest I'll let him know through others. Will you kindly give me the pleasure of fulfilling my wish?"

"Ah, no, spare me, for God's sake!" Velchaninov all but cried out, waving his hands.

"What! Spare me?" Nadya was unbelievably astonished by his refusal and stared wide-eyed at him. All her prepared tone broke down in an instant, and she was nearly in tears. Velchaninov laughed.

"It's not that I... I'd be very glad... but I've got my own accounts with him..."

"I knew you weren't his friend and that he was lying!" Nadya interrupted him fervently and quickly. "I'll never marry him, you should know that! Never! I don't even understand how he dared... Only you must return his vile bracelet to him even so, otherwise what am I to do? I absolutely, absolutely want him to get it back today, the same day—and lump it. And if he peaches to Papa, he'll be in real trouble."

Suddenly and quite unexpectedly the ruffled young man in blue spectacles popped from behind a bush.

"You must give him back the bracelet," he fell upon Velchaninov furiously, "if only in the name of women's rights, assuming you yourself stand on the level of the question..."

But he had no time to finish; Nadya pulled him by the sleeve with all her might and tore him away from Velchaninov.

"Lord, how stupid you are, Predposylov!"¹² she cried. "Go away! Go away, go away, and don't you dare eavesdrop, I told you to stand far off!..." She stamped her little feet at him, and when he had slipped back into his bushes, she still went on pacing back and forth across the path, as if beside herself, flashing her eyes and claspings her hands in front of her.

"You wouldn't believe how stupid they are!" she suddenly stopped in front of Velchaninov. "To you it's funny, but how is it for me!"

"But it's not *him*, not *him*?" Velchaninov was laughing.

"Naturally it's not him, how could you think such a thing!" Nadya smiled and turned red. "He's only his friend. But what friends he chooses, I don't understand it, they all say he's a 'future mover,' but I don't understand a thing... Alexei Ivanovich, I have no one to turn to; your final word, will you give it back or not?"

"Well, all right, I'll give it back, let me have it."

"Ah, you're a dear, ah, you're so kind!" she suddenly rejoiced, handing him the case. "For that I'll sing for you the whole evening, because I sing wonderfully, you should know that, and I lied earlier about not liking music. Ah, if only you'd come again, just once, how glad I'd be, I'd tell you everything, everything, everything, and a lot more besides, because you're so kind, so kind, like—like Katya!"

And indeed, when they went back home for tea, she sang two romances for him in a voice not yet trained at all and only just beginning, but rather pleasant and strong. When they all came back from the garden, Pavel Pavlovich was sitting sedately with the parents at the tea table, on which a big family samovar was already boiling and heirloom Sèvres porcelain teacups were set out. Most likely he and the old folks were discussing very serious things—because in two days he would be leaving for a whole nine months. He did not even glance at those who came in from the garden, least of all at Velchaninov; it was also obvious that he had not "peached" and that so far everything was quiet.

But when Nadya started singing, he, too, appeared at once. Nadya purposely did not answer his one direct question, but Pavel Pavlovich was not embarrassed or shaken by that; he stood at the back of her chair and his whole bearing showed that this was his place and he would yield it to no one.

"Alexei Ivanovich will sing, *Maman*, Alexei Ivanovich wants to sing!" nearly all the girls cried, crowding around the piano, at which Velchaninov was confidently sitting down, intending to accompany himself. The old folks came out along with Katerina Fedoseevna, who had been sitting with them and pouring tea.

Velchaninov chose a certain romance by Glinka,¹³ which almost no one knows anymore:

*When you do ope your merry lips, my love
And coo to me more sweetly than a dove...*

He sang it addressing Nadya alone, who stood right at his elbow and closest to him of all. He had long ago lost his voice, but from what remained, one could see that it had once been not bad. Velchaninov had managed to hear this

romance for the first time some twenty years before, when he was still a student, from Glinka himself, in the house of one of the late composer's friends, at a literary-artistic bachelor party. Glinka, carried away, had played and sung all his favorite things from his own works, including this romance. He also had no voice left by then, but Velchaninov remembered the extraordinary impression produced then precisely by this romance. No artistic salon singer could ever have achieved such an effect. In this romance, the intensity of the passion rises and grows with every line, every word; precisely because of this extraordinary intensity, the slightest falseness, the slightest exaggeration or untruth—which one gets away with so easily in opera—would here ruin and distort the whole meaning. To sing this small but remarkable thing, one had absolutely—yes, absolutely—to have a full, genuine inspiration, a genuine passion or its full poetic assimilation. Otherwise the romance would not only fail altogether, but might even appear outrageous and all but something shameless: it would be impossible to show such intensity of passionate feeling without provoking disgust, yet truth and *simple-heartedness* saved everything. Velchaninov remembered that he himself once used to succeed with this romance. He had almost assimilated Glinka's manner of singing; but now, from the very first sound, from the first line, a genuine inspiration blazed up in his soul and trembled in his voice. With every word of the romance, the feeling broke through and bared itself more strongly and boldly, in the last lines cries of passion were heard, and when, turning his flashing eyes to Nadya, he finished singing the last words of the romance:

*Now I do gaze more boldly in your eyes
My lips approach, to list I no more rise,
I want to kiss, I want to kiss and kiss,
I want to kiss, to kiss and kiss and kiss!*

—Nadya almost started in fright, and even recoiled a little; a blush poured over her cheeks, and at the same moment Velchaninov saw something as if responsive flash in her embarrassed and almost abashed little face. Fascination, and at the same time perplexity, showed on the faces of all the listening girls as well; to everyone it seemed as if impossible and shameful to sing like that, and at the same time all these little faces and eyes burned and shone as if waiting for something more. Among these faces there especially flashed before Velchaninov the face of Katerina Fedoseevna, which had become almost beautiful.

"Some romance!" muttered old Zakhlebinin, slightly taken aback. "But... isn't it too strong? Pleasant, but strong..."

"Strong..." Mme. Zakhlebinin echoed, but Pavel Pavlovich did not let her finish: he suddenly popped forward and, as if mad, forgetting himself so much that with his own hand he seized Nadya by the hand and drew her away from Velchaninov, he then leaped up to him and stared at him like a lost man, moving his trembling lips.

"For one moment, sir," he finally managed to utter.

Velchaninov saw clearly that in another moment this gentleman might venture on something ten times more absurd; he quickly took him by the arm and, ignoring the general perplexity, led him out to the balcony and even took several steps with him down to the garden, where it was already almost completely dark.

"Do you understand that you must leave with me right now, this very minute!" Pavel Pavlovich said.

"No, I don't..."

"Do you remember," Pavel Pavlovich went on in his frenetic whisper, "do you remember how you demanded once that I tell you everything, *everything*, openly, sir, 'the very last word ...'—do you remember, sir? Well, the time has come for saying that word... let's go, sir!"

Velchaninov reflected, glanced once more at Pavel Pavlovich, and agreed to leave.

Their suddenly announced departure upset the parents and made all the girls terribly indignant.

"At least another cup of tea," Mme. Zakhlebinin moaned plaintively.

"Why did you get so upset?" the old man, in a stern and displeased tone, addressed the grinning and stubbornly silent Pavel Pavlovich.

"Pavel Pavlovich, why are you taking Alexei Ivanovich away?" the girls cooed plaintively, at the same time glancing at him with bitterness. And Nadya looked at him so angrily that he cringed all over, yet—he did not yield.

"But in fact, Pavel Pavlovich—and I thank him for it—has reminded me of an extremely important matter, which I might have let slip," Velchaninov laughed, shaking hands with the host, bowing to the hostess and to the girls, and, as if especially among them, to Katerina Fedoseevna, which again was noticed by everyone.

"We thank you for coming and will always be glad to see you, all of us," Zakhlebinin concluded weightily.

"Ah, we're so glad..." the mother of the family picked up with feeling.

"Come again, Alexei Ivanovich, come again!" many voices were heard from the balcony when he was already sitting in the carriage with Pavel Pavlovich; barely heard was one little voice, softer than all the others, that said: "Come again, dear, dear Alexei Ivanovich!"

"It's the little redhead!" thought Velchaninov.

XIII WHOSE SIDE HAS MORE ON IT

He was able to think about the little redhead, and yet vexation and repentance had long been wearying his soul. And during this whole day—spent so amusingly, one would have thought—sorrow had almost never left him. Before singing the romance, he had already not known where to escape from it; maybe that was why he had sung with such feeling.

"And I could stoop so low... break away from everything!" he began to reproach himself, but hastened to interrupt his thoughts. And it seemed so low to lament; it would have been much more pleasant to quickly get angry with someone.

"Mor-ron!" he whispered spitefully, glancing sideways at Pavel Pavlovich, who was silently sitting next to him in the carriage.

Pavel Pavlovich remained obstinately silent, perhaps concentrating and preparing himself. With an impatient gesture he occasionally took off his hat and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"He's sweating!" Velchaninov kept up his spite.

Only once did Pavel Pavlovich advert to the coachman with a question: "Will there be a thunderstorm, or not?"

"Aye, and a good one! There's bound to be, it was such a sultry day." Indeed, the sky was darkening, and distant lightning flashed. They entered the city at half past ten.

"I'm going to your place, sir," Pavel Pavlovich obligingly addressed Velchaninov, not far from his house.

"I understand; but I must warn you that I feel seriously unwell..."

"I won't stay long, I won't stay long!"

As they came through the gateway, Pavel Pavlovich ran over for a moment to Mavra at the caretaker's.

"Why did you go there?" Velchaninov asked sternly when the man caught up with him and they went into his rooms.

"Never mind, sir, just so... the coachman, sir..."

"I won't let you drink!"

No answer came. Velchaninov lit the candles, and Pavel Pavlovich settled at once into an armchair. Velchaninov frowningly stopped before him.

"I also promised to tell you my 'last' word," he began with an inward, still suppressed, irritation. "Here it is, this word: I consider in good conscience that all matters between us have been mutually ended, so that we even have nothing to talk about; do you hear—nothing; and therefore it might be better if you left now and I locked the door behind you."

"Let's square accounts, Alexei Ivanovich!" Pavel Pavlovich said, but with a somehow especially meek look in his eyes.

"Square ac-counts?" Velchaninov was terribly surprised. "That's a strange phrase to utter! What 'accounts' have we got to 'square'? Hah! Is it that 'last word' of yours, which you promised earlier to... reveal to me?"

"The very same, sir."

"We have no more accounts to square, they were squared long ago!" Velchaninov said proudly.

"Do you really think so, sir?" Pavel Pavlovich said in a soulful voice, somehow strangely joining his hands in front of him, finger to finger, and holding them in front of his chest. Velchaninov did not answer him and started pacing the room. "Liza? Liza?" moaned in his heart.

"But, anyhow, what is it you wanted to square?" he addressed him frowningly, after a rather prolonged silence. The man had followed him around the room with his eyes all the while, holding his joined hands in front of him in the same way.

"Don't go there anymore, sir," he almost whispered in a pleading voice, and suddenly got up from the chair.

"What? So it's only about that?" Velchaninov laughed spitefully. "Though you've made me marvel all day today!" he began venomously, but suddenly his whole face changed: "Listen to me," he said sadly and with profoundly sincere feeling, "I consider that I've never stooped so low in anything as I did today—first by agreeing to go with you, and then—by what happened there... It was so pretty, so pathetic... I befouled and demeaned myself by getting involved... and forgetting... Well, never mind!" he suddenly recollected himself. "Listen: you happened to fall on me today when I was irritated and sick... well, no point in justifying myself! I won't go there anymore, and I assure you that I have absolutely no interest there," he concluded resolutely.

"Really? Really?" Pavel Pavlovich cried out, not concealing his joyful excitement. Velchaninov glanced at him with scorn and again started pacing the room.

"It seems you've decided to be happy at all costs?" he finally could not refrain from observing.

"Yes, sir," Pavel Pavlovich softly and naively confirmed.

"What is it to me," thought Velchaninov, "that he's a buffoon and his malice comes only from stupidity? All the same I can't help hating him—though he may not deserve it!"

"I'm an 'eternal husband,' sir!" Pavel Pavlovich said with a humbly submissive smile at himself. "I've long known this little phrase of yours, Alexei Ivanovich, ever since you lived there with us, sir. I memorized many of your words from that year. When you said 'eternal husband' here the last time, I realized it, sir."

Mavra came in with a bottle of champagne and two glasses.

"Forgive me, Alexei Ivanovich, you know I can't do without it, sir. Don't regard it as boldness; consider me a stranger and not worthy of you, sir."

"Yes..." Velchaninov allowed with disgust, "but I assure you that I'm feeling unwell..."

"Quickly, quickly, just one moment now!" Pavel Pavlovich hurried, "only one little glass, because my throat..."

He greedily drank the glass in one gulp and sat down—casting an all but tender glance at Velchaninov. Mavra went out.

"How loathsome!" Velchaninov whispered.

"It's only the girlfriends, sir," Pavel Pavlovich suddenly said cheerfully, thoroughly revived.

"How? What? Ah, yes, you're still at it..."

"Only the girlfriends, sir! And still so young; we're showing off out of gracefulness, that's what, sir! It's even charming. And then—then, you know, I'll become her slave; she'll know esteem, society... she'll get completely reeducated, sir."

"By the way, I must give him the bracelet!" Velchaninov thought, frowning and feeling for the case in his coat pocket.

"Now you say, sir, that I've decided to be happy? I must get married, Alexei Ivanovich," Pavel Pavlovich went on confidentially and almost touchingly, "otherwise what will become of me? You can see for yourself, sir!" he pointed to the bottle.

"And this is only a hundredth part—of my qualities, sir. I'm quite unable to do without being married and—without new faith, sir. I'll believe and resurrect."

"But why are you telling all this to me?" Velchaninov almost snorted with laughter. Anyhow, it all seemed wild to him.

"But tell me, finally," he cried out, "why did you drag me there? What did you need me there for?"

"As a test, sir..." Pavel Pavlovich somehow suddenly became embarrassed.

"A test of what?"

"Of the effect, sir... You see, Alexei Ivanovich, it's only a week that I... that I've been seeking there, sir" (he was growing more and more abashed). "Yesterday I met you and thought: 'I've never seen her in, so to speak, a stranger's, that is, a man's company, sir, apart from my own ...' A foolish thought, sir, I feel it myself now, an unnecessary one, sir, I just wanted it so much, sir, on account of my nasty character..." He suddenly raised his head and blushed.

"Can he be telling the whole truth?" Velchaninov thought, amazed to the point of stupefaction.

"Well, and what then?"

Pavel Pavlovich smiled sweetly and somehow slyly.

"Nothing but lovely childishness, sir! It's all the girlfriends, sir! Only forgive me for my stupid behavior toward you today, Alexei Ivanovich; I'll never do it again, sir; and this thing won't ever happen again."

"And I won't be there anyway," Velchaninov smirked.

"That's partly what I'm referring to, sir."

Velchaninov winced slightly.

"However, I'm not the only one in the world," he observed vexedly.

Pavel Pavlovich blushed again.

"It makes me sad to hear that, Alexei Ivanovich, and, believe me, I respect Nadezhda Fedoseevna so much..."

"Excuse me, excuse me, I didn't mean anything—it's only a bit strange to me that you overestimated my means so much... and... were relying on me so sincerely..."

"I relied on you, sir, precisely because it was after everything... that had already been, sir."

"Meaning that you still regard me, in that case, as a most noble man?" Velchaninov suddenly stopped. At another moment he himself would have been horrified at the naivete of his sudden question.

"And I always did, sir." Pavel Pavlovich lowered his eyes.

"Well, yes, naturally... I don't mean that—that is, not in that sense—I only wanted to say that despite any... prejudice..."

"Yes, sir, and despite any prejudice."

"And when you were coming to Petersburg?" Velchaninov could no longer restrain himself, feeling all the monstrosity of his curiosity.

"And when I was coming to Petersburg, I considered you the most noble of men, sir. I've always respected you, Alexei Ivanovich." Pavel Pavlovich raised his eyes and clearly, now without any embarrassment, looked at his adversary. Velchaninov suddenly turned coward: he decidedly did not want anything to happen or anything to go over the line, the more so as he himself had provoked it.

"I loved you, Alexei Ivanovich," Pavel Pavlovich said as if suddenly making up his mind, "And I loved you, sir, all that year in T——. You didn't notice it, sir," he went on in a slightly quavering voice, to Velchaninov's decided horror, "I stood too small compared with you in order for you to notice. And perhaps it wasn't necessary, sir. And for all these nine years I've remembered you, sir, because never in my life have I known such a year as that." (Pavel Pavlovich's eyes glistened somehow peculiarly.) "I remembered many of your words and utterances, sir, of your thoughts, sir. I always remembered you as an educated man, sir, ardent for good feelings, highly educated, and with thoughts. 'Great thoughts come not so much from great intelligence as from great feeling, sir'—you yourself said that, and perhaps forgot it, but I remembered it, sir. I always counted on you, that is, as on a man of great feeling... that is, I believed, sir—despite all, sir..." His chin suddenly trembled. Velchaninov was completely frightened; this unexpected tone had to be stopped at all costs.

"Enough, please, Pavel Pavlovich," he muttered, blushing and in irritated impatience. "And why, why," he suddenly cried out, "why do you fasten yourself on to a sick, irritated, all but delirious man, and drag him into this darkness... when—it's all a phantom and a mirage, and a lie, and shame, and unnaturalness, and—excessive—and that's the main, the most shameful thing, that it's excessive! And it's all rubbish: we're two depraved, underground, vile people... And if you like, if you like, I'll prove to you right now that you not only do not love me, but that you hate me with all your strength and are lying without knowing it yourself: you took me and drove me there not at all for the ridiculous purpose of testing your fiancée (what a thing to come up with!)—you simply saw me yesterday and got angry and took me there to show her to me and say: 'See her! She's going to be mine; go on and try something now!' You challenged me! Maybe you didn't know it yourself, but it was so, because you did feel all that... And without hatred one can't make such a challenge; and that means you hated me!" He was rushing up and down the room as he shouted this out, and most of all he was tormented and offended by the humiliating awareness that he was condescending so much to Pavel Pavlovich.

"I wished to make peace with you, Alexei Ivanovich!" the other suddenly pronounced resolutely, in a quick whisper, and his chin began to twitch again. Fierce rage took possession of Velchaninov, as if no one had ever given him such offense before!

"I tell you once again," he screamed, "that you are... clinging to a sick and irritated man in order to tear from him, in his delirium, some phantasmal word! We... but we're people from different worlds, understand that, and... and... a grave lies between us!" he whispered frenziedly—and suddenly recovered himself.

"And how do you know," Pavel Pavlovich's face suddenly became distorted and pale, "how do you know what that little grave means here... inside me, sir!" he cried out, stepping up to Velchaninov and, with a ridiculous but terrible gesture, striking himself on the heart with his fist. "I know that little grave here, sir, and we two stand on the sides of that grave, only my side has more on it than yours, more, sir..." he was whispering as if in delirium, while continuing to hit himself on the heart, "more, sir—more, sir..." Suddenly an extraordinary stroke of the doorbell brought them both to their senses. The ring was so strong that it seemed as if someone had vowed to tear the bell off with the first stroke.

"No one rings like that for me," Velchaninov said in bewilderment.

"But it's not for me either, sir," Pavel Pavlovich whispered timidly, having also come to his senses and instantly turned back into the former Pavel Pavlovich. Velchaninov frowned and went to open the door.

"Mr. Velchaninov, if I am not mistaken?" a young, ringing, remarkably self-confident voice was heard in the hall.
"What is it?"
"I have precise information," the ringing voice went on, "that a certain Trusotsky is presently with you. I absolutely must see him at once." It would, of course, have been very agreeable to Velchaninov to send this self-confident gentleman down the stairs at once with a good kick. But he reflected, stepped aside, and let him pass.
"Here is Mr. Trusotsky. Come in..."

XIV SASHENKA AND NADENKA

Into the room came a very young man, of about nineteen, perhaps even somewhat less—so youthful seemed his handsome, confidently upturned face. He was not badly dressed, at least everything sat well on him; he was above medium height; thick black hair broken into locks, and big, bold dark eyes especially marked his physiognomy. Only his nose was a little too broad and upturned; had it not been for that, he would have been an altogether handsome fellow. He entered imposingly.

"I believe I have the—occasion—of speaking with Mr. Trusotsky?" he said measuredly, emphasizing the word "occasion" with particular pleasure, thereby letting it be known that there could be neither honor nor pleasure for him in talking with Mr. Trusotsky.

Velchaninov was beginning to understand; it seemed that Pavel Pavlovich, too, was already seeing some light. His face expressed uneasiness; however, he stood up for himself.

"Not having the honor of knowing you," he answered with a dignified air, "I suppose that I cannot have any business with you, sir."

"First you will hear me out, and then express your opinion," the young man said confidently and didactically, and, taking out a tortoiseshell lorgnette which he had hanging on a string, he began scrutinizing through it the bottle of champagne standing on the table. Having calmly finished his examination of the bottle, he folded the lorgnette and, again addressing Pavel Pavlovich, said:

"Alexander Lobov."

"And what is this Alexander Lobov, sir?"

"I am he. Haven't you heard?"

"No, sir."

"Anyway, how could you know. I've come with an important matter, which in fact concerns you; allow me to sit down, however, I'm tired..."

"Sit down," Velchaninov invited—but the young man had managed to sit down before he was invited. Despite a growing pain in his chest, Velchaninov was intrigued by this impudent boy. In his pretty, childish, and ruddy face he glimpsed some distant resemblance to Nadya.

"You sit down, too," the youth offered to Pavel Pavlovich, indicating the place opposite him with a casual nod.

"Never mind, sir, I'll stand."

"You'll get tired. I suppose, Mr. Velchaninov, that you may not have to go."

"I have nowhere to go. I live here."

"As you will. I confess, I even wish you to be present at my talk with this gentleman. Nadezhda Fedoseevna has recommended you to me quite flatteringly."

"Hah! When did she have time?"

"Just after you left. I'm coming from there, too. The thing is this, Mr. Trusotsky," he turned to the standing Pavel Pavlovich, "we, that is, Nadezhda Fedoseevna and I," he spoke through his teeth, sprawling casually in the armchair, "have long been in love and have pledged ourselves to each other. You are now a hindrance between us; I've come to suggest that you vacate that place. Will you be pleased to accept my suggestion?"

Pavel Pavlovich even swayed; he turned pale, but a sarcastic smile at once forced itself to his lips.

"No, sir, not at all pleased," he snapped laconically.

"Well, now!" the youth turned in the armchair and crossed one leg over the other.

"I don't even know with whom I am speaking, sir," Pavel Pavlovich added, "I even think there is no reason for us to continue."

Having spoken that out, he, too, found it necessary to sit down.

"I told you you'd get tired," the youth observed casually. "I just had occasion to inform you that my name is Lobov and that Nadezhda Fedoseevna and I have pledged ourselves to each other—consequently, you can't say, as you just did, that you don't know whom you are dealing with; nor can you think that we have nothing to continue talking about; not to mention me—the matter concerns Nadezhda Fedoseevna, whom you are so insolently pestering. And that alone already constitutes a sufficient reason for explanations."

All this he said through his teeth, like a fop, even barely deigning to articulate the words; he even took out the lorgnette again and, while speaking, directed it at something for a moment.

"Excuse me, young man..." Pavel Pavlovich exclaimed vexedly, but the "young man" at once checked him.

"At any other time I would, of course, forbid you to call me 'young man,' but now, you must agree, my youth is my chief advantage over you, and you might have wished very much—today, for instance, as you were presenting the bracelet—that you were at least a little bit younger."

"Ah, you sprat!" Velchaninov whispered.

"In any case, my dear sir," Pavel Pavlovich corrected himself with dignity, "I still do not find the reasons you have presented—improper and quite dubious reasons—sufficient for the dispute over them to be continued, sir. I see this is all a childish and empty matter; tomorrow I will make inquiries of the most esteemed Fedosei Semyonovich, but now I beg

you to spare me, sir."

"See how the man is!" the youth cried out at once, unable to sustain the tone, hotly addressing Velchaninov. "It's not enough that he's chased away from there and they stick their tongues out at him—he also wants to denounce us tomorrow to the old man! Don't you prove by that, you obstinate man, that you want to take the girl by force, buying her from people who have lost their minds, but, owing to social barbarism, have kept their power over her? She has shown well enough, it seems, that she despises you; wasn't today's indecent gift—your bracelet—returned to you? What more do you want?"

"No one returned any bracelet to me, and that cannot be," Pavel Pavlovich gave a start.

"Cannot be? Didn't Mr. Velchaninov give it to you?"

"Ah, devil take you!" thought Velchaninov.

"Indeed," he said, frowning, "Nadezhda Fedoseevna entrusted me earlier with giving this case to you, Pavel Pavlovich. I didn't want to take it, but she—insisted... here it is... quite annoying..."

He took out the case and, in embarrassment, placed it in front of the petrified Pavel Pavlovich.

"Why hadn't you given it to him?" the young man sternly addressed Velchaninov.

"I hadn't found time, one might think," the latter frowned.

"That's odd."

"Wha-a-at?"

"It's odd, to say the least, you must agree. However, I agree to allow that it was a misunderstanding."

Velchaninov would have liked terribly to get up right then and box the boy's ears, but he could not contain himself and suddenly snorted with laughter; the boy at once laughed himself. Not so Pavel Pavlovich; if Velchaninov could have noticed the terrible look he gave him when he burst out laughing at Lobov—he would have understood that at that moment the man was crossing a certain fatal line... But, though he did not see his look, Velchaninov understood that he had to support Pavel Pavlovich.

"Listen, Mr. Lobov," he began in a friendly tone, "without going into a consideration of other reasons, which I do not wish to touch upon, I would merely like to point out to you that Pavel Pavlovich, after all, in proposing to Nadezhda Fedoseevna, is bringing to this respectable family—first, full information about himself; second, his excellent and respectable position; and finally, his fortune; and, consequently, he is of course surprised to see a rival such as you—a man of great merits, perhaps, but one still so young that he simply cannot take you as a serious rival... and is therefore right in asking you to finish."

"What do you mean 'so young'? I turned nineteen a month ago. Legally, I've been able to marry for a long time. There you have it."

"But what father would venture to give his daughter to you now—though you may be a big future millionaire or some sort of future benefactor of mankind? At the age of nineteen a man can't even answer for his own self, and you venture to take upon your conscience someone else's future—that is, the future of a child like yourself! That's also not entirely noble, do you think? I've allowed myself to speak out, because you addressed me earlier as a mediator between yourself and Pavel Pavlovich."

"Ah, yes, incidentally, his name is Pavel Pavlovich!" the youth remarked. "Why did I keep imagining it was Vassily Petrovich? The thing is this, sir," he turned to Velchaninov, "you haven't surprised me in the least; I knew you were all the same! Strange, however, that I was told you were even something of a new man. Anyway, it's all trifles, and the point is that there is nothing here that is not noble on my part, as you allowed yourself to put it, but even quite the contrary, which I hope to explain to you: we have, first of all, pledged ourselves to each other, and, besides that, I promised her directly, in front of two witnesses, that if she ever falls in love with another, or simply thinks better of having married me, and wants to divorce me, I will immediately give her a certificate of my own adultery—thus supporting, therewith, where necessary, her application for divorce. Moreover, in the event I should go back on my word later and refuse to give her this certificate, then, for her security, on the very day of our wedding I will give her a promissory note for a hundred thousand roubles in my name, so that, in the event I persist in refusing the certificate, she can immediately turn in my promissory note and have me double-trumped! In this way everything is provided for, and I'm not putting anyone's future at risk. Well, sir, that's the first thing."

"I bet it was that one—what's his name—Predposylov who thought it up for you?" cried Velchaninov.

"Hee, hee, hee!" Pavel Pavlovich tittered venomously.

"Why is this gentleman tittering? You've guessed right—it's Predposylov's thought; and you must agree it's clever. The absurd law is completely paralyzed. Naturally, I intend to love her always, and she laughs terribly—but even so it's adroit, and you must agree that it's noble, that not everyone would venture on such a thing?"

"In my opinion, it is not only not noble, but even vile."

The young man heaved his shoulders.

"Once again you don't surprise me," he observed after some silence, "all this stopped surprising me long ago. Predposylov would snap out directly that this failure of yours to understand the most natural things comes from the perversion of your most ordinary feelings and notions, first, by a long life of absurdity, and second, by long idleness. However, maybe we still don't understand each other; after all, you were well spoken of to me... You're already about fifty, though?"

"Get on with your business, please."

"Excuse the indiscretion and don't be annoyed; I didn't mean anything. To continue: I'm not at all a future big millionaire, as you were pleased to put it (and what an idea to come up with!), I'm all here, as you see me, but of my future I'm absolutely certain. I won't be a hero or anybody's benefactor, but I'll provide for myself and my wife. Of course, right now I have nothing, I was even brought up in their house, ever since childhood..."

"How's that?"

"It's because I'm the son of a distant relative of this Zakhlebinin's wife, and when all my people died and left me at the age of eight, the old man took me into his house and then sent me to school. He's even a kind man, if you wish to

know..."

"I know that, sir..."

"Yes, but much too antiquated a head. Kind, though. Now, of course, I've long since left his custody, wishing to earn my own living and be owing only to myself."

"And when did you leave it?" Velchaninov was curious.

"That would be about four months ago."

"Ah, well, it's all clear now: friends from childhood! Do you have a job or something?"

"Yes, a private one, in a notary's office, twenty-five roubles a month. Of course, that's only for the time being, but when I made my proposal I didn't even have that. I was working for the railroad then, for ten roubles, but this is all only for the time being."

"So you even made a proposal?"

"A formal proposal, long ago, three weeks or more."

"Well, and what then?"

"The old man laughed a lot, but then got very angry, and she was locked upstairs in the attic. But Nadya endured it heroically. Anyway, it was all a failure, because the old man had his back up against me before then for leaving the office job he'd gotten me four months earlier, before the railroad. He's a nice old man, I repeat again, simple and merry at home, but the moment he's in the office, you can't even imagine! It's some sort of Jupiter sitting there! I naturally let him know that his manners were no longer to my liking, but the main thing here came out because of the assistant section chief: this gentleman decided to peach on me for supposedly 'being rude' to him, though I only told him he was undeveloped. I dropped them all and am now with the notary."

"And were you paid much at the office?"

"Eh, I was a supernumerary! The old man supported me himself—I told you he's kind; but even so we won't yield. Of course, twenty-five roubles is no great prosperity, but I soon hope to take part in managing the disordered estates of Count Zavileisky, and then I'll go straight up to three thousand; or else I'll become a lawyer. They're looking for people now... Hah! what thunder, there'll be a storm, it's a good thing I managed before the storm; I came from there on foot, running most of the way."

"But, excuse me, in that case when did you manage to talk with Nadezhda Fedoseevna—if, on top of that, you're not received there?"

"Ah, but that can be done over the fence! You did notice the little redhead today?" he laughed. "Well, she took care of it, and so did Marya Nikitishna; only this Marya Nikitishna is a serpent!... why did you wince? You're not afraid of thunder?"

"No, I'm unwell, very unwell..." Velchaninov was indeed suffering from his unexpected pain in the chest, got up from his chair, and tried to pace the room.

"Ah, then naturally I'm bothering you—don't worry, I'll leave at once!" and the youth jumped up from his place.

"You're not bothering me, it's nothing," said the delicate Velchaninov.

"How is it nothing, when 'Kobylnikov has a stomachache'—remember in Shchedrin?¹⁴ Do you like Shchedrin?"

"Yes..."

"So do I. Well, Vassily... no, what's your name, Pavel Pavlovich, let's finish, sir!" he addressed Pavel Pavlovich, almost laughing. "I'll formulate the question once more for your understanding: do you agree to renounce tomorrow, officially, in front of the old folks and in my presence, all your claims regarding Nadezhda Fedoseevna?"

"I don't agree at all, sir," Pavel Pavlovich also rose with an impatient and embittered look, "and with that I ask you once more to spare me, sir... because all this is childish and silly, sir."

"Watch out!" the youth shook his finger at him with a haughty smile, "don't make a mistake in your calculations! Do you know what such a mistake may lead to? And I warn you that in nine months, when you've spent everything there, worn yourself out, and come back—you'll be forced to renounce Nadezhda Fedoseevna here, and if you don't renounce her—so much the worse for you; that's what you'll bring things to! I must warn you that you are now like the dog in the manger—excuse me, it's just a comparison—none for yourself, none for anyone else. I repeat out of humaneness: reflect, force yourself to reflect well for at least once in your life."

"I beg you to spare me your morals," Pavel Pavlovich shouted fiercely, "and as for your nasty hints, I'll take my measures tomorrow—severe measures, sir!"

"Nasty hints? What are you referring to? You're nasty yourself, if that's what's in your head. However, I agree to wait until tomorrow, but if... Ah, again this thunder! Goodbye, very glad to have met you," he nodded to Velchaninov and ran, evidently hurrying to keep ahead of the thunderstorm and not get caught in the rain.

XV ACCOUNTS ARE SQUARED

"Did you see? Did you see, sir?" Pavel Pavlovich sprang over to Velchaninov as soon as the youth went out.

"Yes, you have no luck!" Velchaninov let slip inadvertently. He would not have said these words if he were not so tormented and angered by this increasing pain in his chest. Pavel Pavlovich gave a start, as if burnt.

"Well, and you, sir—it must have been from pity for me that you didn't return the bracelet—ha?"

"I had no chance..."

"From heartfelt pity, as a true friend pities a true friend?"

"Well, yes, I pitied you." Velchaninov became angry.

He did, nevertheless, tell him briefly how he had gotten the bracelet back earlier and how Nadezhda Fedoseevna had nearly forced him to take part...

"You understand, I wouldn't have taken it for anything; I have enough troubles without that!"

"You got carried away and took it!" Pavel Pavlovich tittered.

"That's stupid on your part; however, you must be forgiven. You saw yourself just now that the main one in the matter is not I but others!"

"Even so you got carried away, sir."

Pavel Pavlovich sat down and filled his glass.

"Do you suppose I'm going to yield to this youngster, sir? I'll tie him in a knot, that's what, sir! Tomorrow I'll go and tie everything up! We'll smoke this spirit out of the nursery, sir..."

He drank his glass almost in one gulp and poured more; in general he began to behave with a hitherto unusual casualness.

"See, Nadenka and Sashenka, dear little children—hee, hee, hee!"

He was beside himself with spite. There came another loud clap of thunder; lightning flashed blindingly, and the rain poured down in buckets. Pavel Pavlovich got up and closed the open window.

"And him asking you: 'You're not afraid of thunder?'—hee, hee! Velchaninov afraid of thunder! Kobylnikov has a—how is it—Kobylnikov has... And about being fifty years old—eh? Remember, sir?" Pavel Pavlovich went on sarcastically.

"You, incidentally, have settled in nicely here," Velchaninov observed, barely able to utter the words from pain. "I'll lie down... you do as you like."

"One wouldn't put a dog out in such weather!" Pavel Pavlovich picked up touchily, though almost glad that he had the right to be touchy.

"Well, so sit, drink... spend the night even!" Velchaninov mumbled, stretched out on the sofa, and groaned slightly.

"Spend the night, sir? Aren't you... afraid, sir?"

"Of what?" Velchaninov suddenly raised his head.

"Never mind, sir, just so. Last time you were as if afraid, or else I only imagined it..."

"You're stupid!" Velchaninov burst out and turned angrily to the wall.

"Never mind, sir," Pavel Pavlovich responded.

The sick man somehow suddenly fell asleep, a moment after lying down. All the unnatural tension of this day, not to mention the great disorder of his health recently, somehow suddenly snapped, and he became as strengthless as a child. But the pain got its own back and overcame weariness and sleep; an hour later he awoke and with suffering got up from the sofa. The thunderstorm had abated; the room was filled with smoke, the bottle stood empty, and Pavel Pavlovich was sleeping on the other sofa. He was lying on his back, his head on a sofa pillow, fully dressed, with his boots on. His lorgnette, having slipped from his pocket, hung on its string almost to the floor. His hat lay near him, also on the floor. Velchaninov looked at him sullenly and decided not to wake him up. Bending over and pacing the room, because he was no longer able to lie down, he moaned and reflected on his pain.

He feared this pain in his chest not without reason. He had begun having these attacks long ago, but they visited him very rarely—once in a year or two. He knew it was from his liver. It began as if with a still dull, not strong, but bothersome pressure gathering at some point in his chest, in the pit of his stomach or higher up. Growing constantly, sometimes over the course of ten hours, the pain would finally reach such intensity, the pressure would become so unbearable, that the sick man would begin imagining death. During the last attack, which had come a year before, when the pain finally subsided after the tenth hour, he suddenly felt so strengthless that he could barely move his hand as he lay in bed, and for the whole day the doctor allowed him only a few teaspoons of weak tea and a little pinch of bread soaked in bouillon, like a nursing infant. This pain appeared on different occasions, but always with upset nerves to begin with. It would also pass strangely: sometimes, when caught at the very beginning, in the first half hour, everything would go away at once with simple poultices; but sometimes, as during the last attack, nothing would help, and the pain would subside only after a repeated and progressive taking of emetics. The doctor confessed afterward that he had been convinced it was poisoning. Now it was still a long time till morning, he did not want to send for a doctor during the night, and besides he did not like doctors. Finally, he could not help himself and started moaning loudly. The moans awakened Pavel Pavlovich: he sat up on the sofa and listened with fear for some time, his perplexed eyes following Velchaninov, who was nearly running all around the two rooms. The bottle he had drunk also affected him strongly, not in the usual way, and for a long time he could not collect himself; finally he understood and rushed to Velchaninov; the latter mumbled something in response.

"It's from your liver, sir, I know this!" Pavel Pavlovich suddenly became terribly animated. "Pyotr Kuzmich had it, Polosukhin, he had it in exactly the same way, from the liver, sir. It's a case for poultices, sir. Pyotr Kuzmich always used poultices... You can die of it, sir! I'll run and fetch Mavra—eh?"

"No need, no need," Velchaninov waved him away vexedly, "no need for anything."

But Pavel Pavlovich, God knows why, was almost beside himself, as if it were a matter of saving his own son. He would not listen, he insisted as hard as he could on the necessity for poultices and, on top of that, two or three cups of weak tea, drunk all at once—"not simply hot, sir, but boiling hot!" He did run to Mavra, without waiting for permission, made a fire with her in the kitchen, which had always stood empty, started the samovar; meanwhile he managed to put the sick man to bed, took his street clothes off, wrapped him in a blanket, and in no more than twenty minutes had cooked up some tea and the first poultice.

"It's heated plates, sir, burning hot!" he said almost in ecstasy, placing the heated plate wrapped in a towel on Velchaninov's pained chest. "There aren't any other poultices, sir, and it would take too long to get them, and plates, I swear on my honor, sir, will even be best of all; it's been tested on Pyotr Kuzmich, sir, with my own eyes and hands. You can die of it, sir. Drink the tea, swallow it—never mind if it burns you; life's dearer... than foppery, sir..."

He got the half-asleep Mavra to bustle about; the plates were changed every three or four minutes. After the third plate and the second cup of boiling hot tea drunk at one gulp, Velchaninov suddenly felt relief.

"Once you've dislodged the pain, thank God for that, sir, it's a good sign!" Pavel Pavlovich cried out and ran to fetch a fresh plate and fresh tea.

"Only to break the pain! If we can only turn the pain back!" he kept saying every moment.

After half an hour, the pain was quite weakened, but the patient was so worn out that, however Pavel Pavlovich begged, he would not agree to endure "one more little plate, sir." His eyes were closing from weakness.

"Sleep, sleep," he repeated in a weak voice.

"Right you are!" Pavel Pavlovich agreed.

"You spend the night... what time is it?"

"A quarter to two, sir."

"Spend the night."

"I will, I will."

A minute later the sick man called Pavel Pavlovich again.

"You, you," he murmured when the man came running and bent over him, "you—are better than I! I understand everything, everything... thank you."

"Sleep, sleep," Pavel Pavlovich whispered, and hastened on tiptoe back to his sofa.

As he was falling asleep, the sick man could still hear Pavel Pavlovich quietly and hurriedly making his bed, taking off his clothes, and, finally, putting out the candle and, barely breathing, so as not to make any noise, stretching himself out on the sofa.

Undoubtedly Velchaninov did sleep and fell asleep very soon after the candles were put out; he clearly recalled it afterward. But all the while he slept, till the very moment he woke up, he dreamed that he was not asleep and that it was as if he was quite unable to fall asleep, despite his weakness. Finally, he dreamed he was having a sort of waking delirium and was quite unable to scatter the visions crowding around him, despite the full awareness that it was only delirium and not reality. The visions were all familiar ones; his room was as if filled with people, and the door to the front hall stood open; crowds of people poured in and thronged the stairs. At the table, moved out into the middle of the room, sat a man—exactly as the other time, in the identical dream he had had a month earlier. Just as then, this man sat with his elbow on the table and refused to speak; but now he was wearing a round hat with crape. "What? Could it have been Pavel Pavlovich then, too?" Velchaninov thought—but, peeking into the silent man's face, he convinced himself that it was someone else entirely. "Why the crape, then?" Velchaninov puzzled. The noise, talk, and clamor of people crowding around the table were terrible. It seemed these people had still greater malice toward Velchaninov than in the other dream; they threatened him with their fists and shouted at him about something with all their might, but precisely what—he was quite unable to make out. "But this is a delirium, I know it!" the thought came to him. "I know that I couldn't fall asleep and have now gotten up, because I couldn't stay in bed from anguish!..." However, the shouting and the people, and their gestures, and all—were so vivid, so real, that he sometimes had doubts: "Can it really be a delirium? What do these people want from me, my God! But if it's not a delirium, then is it possible that such a clamor has not awakened Pavel Pavlovich yet? That he's here asleep, right here on the sofa?" Finally, something suddenly happened, again as in that other dream; everyone rushed to the stairs and got terribly jammed in the doorway, because a new crowd was pouring into the room from the stairs. These people were carrying something with them, something big and heavy; one could hear the heavy steps of the carriers resounding on the treads of the stairs and their puffing voices hurriedly calling to each other. Everyone in the room cried out: "They're bringing it, they're bringing it!" All eyes flashed and turned to Velchaninov; threatening and triumphant, everyone pointed to the stairs. No longer doubting in the least that it was all not delirium but the truth, he stood on tiptoe to see quickly, over people's heads, what it was that they were bringing. His heart was pounding, pounding, pounding, and suddenly—exactly as then, in that other dream—there came three loud strokes of the doorbell. And once again this was so clear, so tangibly real a ringing, that, of course, such ringing could not have been merely dreamed in a dream!... He cried out and woke up.

But he did not, as then, go racing for the door. What thought guided his first movement and did he even have any sort of thought at that moment?—no, it was as if someone prompted him to what had to be done: he snatched himself from bed and rushed with outstretched arms, as if defending himself and warding off an attack, straight toward where Pavel Pavlovich lay sleeping. His arms at once met other arms already stretched out over him, and he seized them fast; someone therefore already stood bending over him. The curtains were drawn, but it was not totally dark, because a weak light was coming from the other room, where there were no such curtains. Suddenly something cut the palm and fingers of his left hand terribly painfully, and he instantly understood that he had seized the blade of a knife or razor and gripped it tightly in his hand... At the same moment something fell with a single weighty thump to the floor.

Velchaninov was perhaps three times stronger than Pavel Pavlovich, but their struggle continued for a long time, some three full minutes. He soon bent him down to the floor and twisted his arms behind his back, but for some reason he absolutely wanted to bind those twisted arms. With his right hand—his wounded left hand holding the murderer—he began to grope for the curtain cord, could not find it for a long time, but got hold of it at last and tore it from the window. He himself marveled later at the unnatural strength required for that. In all these three minutes neither of them said a word; one could hear only their heavy breathing and the muffled sounds of the struggle. Finally, having twisted and bound Pavel Pavlovich's arms behind his back, Velchaninov left him on the floor, stood up, opened the window curtain, and raised the blind. It was already light in the solitary street. Opening the window, he stood for a few moments taking deep breaths of air. It was just past four. Closing the window, he walked unhurriedly to the cupboard, took out a clean towel, and wound it very tightly around his left hand to stop the blood flowing from it. Under his feet he found the open razor case, forgotten that morning on the little table just next to the sofa on which Pavel Pavlovich had slept, and locked this case in his bureau with a key. Only after doing all that did he go over to Pavel Pavlovich and begin studying him.

The man had meanwhile managed with effort to get up from the rug and sit in an armchair. He was not dressed, only in his underwear, even without boots. The back and sleeves of his shirt were wet with blood; the blood was not his, but from Velchaninov's cut hand. Of course, this was Pavel Pavlovich, but it would almost have been possible not to recognize him in the first moment, if one had met him like that by chance—so much had his physiognomy changed. He sat awkwardly straight in the armchair because of his bound arms, his distorted and worn-out face gone green, and shivered from time to time. Intently, but with some dark look, as if not yet distinguishing everything, he gazed at

Velchaninov. Suddenly he smiled dully and, nodding at the carafe of water that stood on the table, said in a short half whisper:

"Some water, sir."

Velchaninov poured some and held the glass for him to drink. Pavel Pavlovich greedily fell upon the water; having taken three gulps, he raised his head, looked very intently into the face of Velchaninov, who was standing before him with the glass in his hand, but said nothing and went on drinking. After finishing the water, he gave a deep sigh. Velchaninov took his pillow, picked up his clothes, and went to the other room, locking Pavel Pavlovich in the first room.

His earlier pain had gone away completely, but he felt a new and extreme weakness after the momentary strain just now of that strength which had come to him from God knows where. He tried to sort the incident out, but his thoughts still connected poorly; the shock had been too strong. His eyes would now close, sometimes even for ten minutes, now he would suddenly give a start, wake up, remember everything, raise his aching hand wrapped in the blood-soaked towel, and start thinking greedily and feverishly. He decided only one thing clearly: that Pavel Pavlovich had really wanted to kill him, but that maybe a quarter of an hour before then he had not known he would kill him. The razor case had maybe only flitted past his eyes during the evening without provoking any thought, and had merely stayed in his memory. (As for the razors, they were always kept in his bureau under lock and key, and it was only the previous morning that Velchaninov had taken them out to shave off some superfluous hairs around his mustache and side-whiskers—something he used to do occasionally.)

"If he had long been planning to kill me, he would have made sure to prepare a knife or a pistol beforehand, and not have counted on my razors, which he had never seen until yesterday evening"—came to his head, among other things.

It finally struck six. Velchaninov collected himself, got dressed, and went to Pavel Pavlovich. Unlocking the door, he could not understand what he had locked Pavel Pavlovich in for and why he had not let him out of the house then and there. To his surprise, the arrested man was already fully dressed; he must have found some opportunity for disentangling himself. He was sitting in the armchair, but got up at once, as soon as Velchaninov entered. The hat was already in his hand. His anxious eyes said, as if hurrying:

"Don't start talking; there's no point in starting; there's no reason to talk..."

"Go!" said Velchaninov. "Take your case," he added behind him.

Pavel Pavlovich came back from the door, took the case with the bracelet from the table, put it in his pocket, and walked out to the stairs. Velchaninov stood in the doorway to lock up after him. Their eyes met for the last time. Pavel Pavlovich suddenly stopped, the two gazed into each other's eyes for some five seconds—as if hesitating; finally, Velchaninov waved his arm weakly at him.

"Well, go!" he said in a half voice, closed the door, and locked it.

XVI ANALYSIS

A feeling of extraordinary, immense joy came over him; something was finished, unbound; some terrible anguish loosened and dispersed altogether. So it seemed to him. It had lasted five weeks. He kept raising his hand, looking at the blood-soaked towel, and muttering to himself: "No, now it's all completely finished!" And all that morning, for the first time in those three weeks, he almost did not think of Liza—as if this blood from his cut fingers could "square accounts" even with that anguish.

He was clearly conscious that he had escaped terrible danger. "These people," went through his mind, "it's these very people who, even a minute before, don't know if they're going to stab you, but once they take the knife in their trembling hands and feel the first spurt of hot blood on their fingers, they won't just stab you—they'll cut your head 'clean off,' as convicts say. It's quite so."

He could not stay home and went out convinced that it was necessary to do something right away, or else right away something was sure to be done to him of itself; he walked the streets and waited. He wanted terribly to meet someone, to talk with someone, even a stranger, and only that, finally, suggested to him the thought of a doctor and that his hand probably ought to be properly bandaged. The doctor, an old acquaintance, after examining the wound, asked curiously: "How could this have happened?" Velchaninov laughed him off, joked, and almost told all, but restrained himself. The doctor was obliged to take his pulse and, on learning of the previous night's attack, talked him there and then into taking a calumet he had on hand. He also calmed him down regarding the cut: "There can be no especially bad consequences." Velchaninov laughed loudly and started assuring him that there had already been excellent consequences. The irrepressible desire to tell *all* repeated itself with him two more times that day—once even with a total stranger with whom he himself started a conversation in a pastry shop. Up to then he had hated starting conversations with strangers in public places.

He stopped at shops, bought a newspaper, called at his tailor's and ordered some clothes. The thought of visiting the Pogoreltsevs continued to be disagreeable to him, and he did not think about them; besides, he could not go to the country: it was as if he kept expecting something here in town. He dined with pleasure, talked with the waiter and with a neighboring diner, and drank half a bottle of wine. He did not even think of the possibility of yesterday's attack coming back; he was convinced that his illness had gone completely the very moment yesterday when, having fallen asleep so strengthless, he had jumped from his bed an hour and a half later and with such strength hurled his murderer to the floor. Toward evening, however, he felt dizzy and it was as if something like last night's delirium in sleep began to come over him again at moments. He returned home at dusk and was almost scared of his room when he entered it. Dreadful and eerie his apartment seemed to him. He walked around it several times and even went into his kitchen, where he hardly ever went. "They heated the plates here yesterday," came to his mind. He locked the door well and lit the candles earlier than usual. As he was locking the door, he remembered that half an hour before, passing by the caretaker's room, he had called Mavra out and asked her: "Hadh't Pavel Pavlovich come by while he was out?"—as if he might really have

come by.

Having locked himself in carefully, he unlocked his bureau, took out the case of razors, and opened “yesterday’s” razor to have a look at it. On the white bone handle slight traces of blood remained. He put the razor back into the case and locked it up in the bureau again. He wanted to sleep; he felt that it was necessary to lie down right away—otherwise “tomorrow he won’t be good for anything.” For some reason he imagined the next day as fatal and “definitive.” But the same thoughts that had never left him for a moment all day, even outside, also crowded and throbbed in his sick head now, tirelessly and irresistibly, and he kept thinking, thinking, thinking, and it would be a long time before he fell asleep...

“If we decide that he got up to kill me *inadvertently*” he kept thinking and thinking, “then had the thought come to him at least once before, at least as a dream in some wicked moment?”

He decided the question strangely—that “Pavel Pavlovich had wanted to kill him, but the thought of the killing had never once occurred to the future killer.” In short: “Pavel Pavlovich had wanted to kill, but hadn’t known that he wanted to kill. It’s senseless, but it’s so,” thought Velchaninov. “He came here not to solicit a post and not for Bagautov—though he did solicit a post and call on Bagautov, and was furious when the man died; he despised Bagautov like a chip of wood. He came here for me and came with Liza...”

“And did I myself expect that he... would put a knife in me?” He decided that, yes, he had expected it precisely from the very moment he had seen him in the coach following Bagautov’s coffin. “I began as if to expect something... but, naturally, not this, naturally, not that he would put a knife in me!”

“And can it be, can it be that it was all true,” he exclaimed again, suddenly raising his head from the pillow and opening his eyes, “all that this... madman told me yesterday about his love for me, when his chin trembled and he beat his breast with his fist?”

“Perfectly true!” he decided, tirelessly delving deeper and analyzing. “This Quasimodo¹⁵ from T——is only too sufficiently stupid and noble to fall in love with the lover of his wife, in whom, for twenty years, he noticed *nothing*! He respected me for nine years, he honored my memory and remembered my ‘utterances’—Lord, and I had no idea of anything! He couldn’t have been lying yesterday! But did he love me yesterday when he talked about his love and said: ‘Let’s square accounts’? Yes, loved me *from spite*; that’s the strongest love...”

“And it could have been, and certainly was so, that I produced a colossal impression on him in T——, precisely a colossal and a ‘delightful’ one, and it’s precisely with such a Schiller in the shape of Quasimodo that that could happen! He exaggerated me a hundredfold, because I struck him too much in his philosophical solitude... It would be curious to know, precisely what about me struck him? Really, it might have been fresh gloves and knowing how to put them on. Quasimodos love aesthetics, oh, how they do! Gloves are all too sufficient for some most noble soul, the more so for one of the ‘eternal husbands.’ The rest they’ll fill out a thousandfold and they’ll even fight for you if you want. And how highly he rates my means of seduction! Maybe it’s precisely the means of seduction that struck him most of all. And that cry of his then: ‘If even this one as well, then who can one believe in after that?’ After such a cry, one could turn into a beast!...”

“Hm! He came here so that we could ‘embrace each other and weep,’ as he himself put it in the meanest way—that is, he was coming in order to put a knife in me, but thought he was coming ‘to embrace and weep’... And he brought Liza. What, then: if I had wept with him, maybe he would in fact have forgiven me, because he wanted terribly to forgive!... All this turned, at the first encounter, into drunken clowning and caricature, and into a vile, womanish howling about being offended. (The horns, he made horns over his forehead!) That’s why he came drunk, so as to speak it out, even while clowning; he couldn’t do it not drunk... And he did like clowning, oh, how he did! Oh, how glad he was when he made me kiss him! Only he didn’t know then what he would end with: embracing or killing. It came out, of course, that the best would be both together. The most natural solution!—Yes, sir, nature doesn’t like monsters and finishes them off with ‘natural solutions.’ The most monstrous monster is the monster with noble feelings: I know it from my own experience, Pavel Pavlovich! For a monster, nature is not a tender mother, she’s a stepmother. Nature gives birth to a monster, and, instead of pitying him, executes him—and right she is. Even decent folk in our time don’t get off easily with embraces and tears of all-forgiveness, to say nothing of such as you and I, Pavel Pavlovich!

“Yes, he was stupid enough to take me to his fiancée as well—Lord! His fiancée! Only such a Quasimodo could conceive the thought of ‘resurrection into a new life’—by means of Mademoiselle Zakhlebinin’s innocence! But it’s not your fault, Pavel Pavlovich, it’s not your fault: you’re a monster, and therefore everything in you must be monstrous—both your dreams and your hopes. But, though you’re a monster, you still doubted your dream, and that’s why you required the high sanction of Velchaninov, the reverently respected. He needed Velchaninov’s approval, his confirmation that the dream was not a dream but the real thing. Out of reverent respect for me, he took me there, believing in the nobility of my feelings—believing, perhaps, that there, under a bush, we’d embrace each other and weep, in the proximity of innocence. Yes! and this ‘eternal husband’ was bound, he was obliged, finally, to punish himself definitively for everything sometime or other, and in order to punish himself, he seized the razor—inadvertently, it’s true, but even so he did it! ‘Even so he did stab him with a knife, even so he ended by stabbing him, in the governor’s presence!’ And, by the way, did he have at least some thought of that sort when he was telling me his anecdote about the best man? And was there in fact something that night when he got out of bed and stood in the middle of the room? Hm. No, he stood there *as a joke* then. He got up for his own business, and when he saw that I was afraid of him, he refused to answer me for ten minutes, because he found it very pleasant that I was afraid of him... Maybe it was then that he really imagined something for the first time, as he was standing there in the dark ...

“But all the same, if I hadn’t forgotten those razors on the table yesterday—maybe nothing would have happened. Is that so? Is it so? After all, he did avoid me earlier, he didn’t come for two weeks; he hid from me, *pitying* me! He did choose Bagautov to begin with, and not me! He did jump out of bed at night to warm the plates, thinking of creating a diversion—from the knife to loving-kindness!... He wanted to save himself and me—with warmed-up plates!...”

And for a long time yet the sick head of this former “man of the world” worked in this way, pouring from empty into void, before he calmed down. He woke up the next day with the same sick head, but with a totally *new* and totally

unexpected horror.

This new horror came from the absolute conviction, which unexpectedly consolidated in him, that he, Velchaninov (and man of the world), today, himself, of his own free will, would end it all by going to Pavel Pavlovich—why? what for?—Of that he knew nothing and in his disgust he wanted to know nothing; he knew only that for some reason he would drag himself.

This madness—he could call it nothing else—developed, all the same, to the point of acquiring a possibly reasonable shape and a quite legitimate pretext: he still kept as if envisioning that Pavel Pavlovich would go back to his room, lock the door tightly, and—hang himself, like that cashier Marya Sysoevna told about. This yesterday's reverie gradually turned into a senseless but irrefutable conviction in him. "Why would the fool hang himself?" he interrupted himself every moment. He remembered Liza's words long ago... "And besides, in his place I, too, might hang myself..." it once occurred to him.

The end of it was that, instead of going to dinner, he did after all set out for Pavel Pavlovich's. "I'll just inquire of Marya Sysoevna," he decided. But, before coming out to the street, he stopped suddenly under the gateway.

"Can it be, can it be," he cried, turning crimson with shame. "Can it be that I'm trudging there in order to 'embrace and weep'? Can it be that the whole disgrace lacks only this last senseless abomination!"

But the providence of all respectable and decent people saved him from "senseless abomination." As soon as he reached the street, he suddenly ran into Alexander Lobov. The youth was puffing and excited.

"I was coming to see you! This friend of yours, Pavel Pavlovich, just imagine!"

"Hanged himself?" Velchaninov muttered wildly.

"Who hanged himself? Why?" Lobov goggled his eyes.

"Never mind... just so, go on!"

"Pah, the devil, what a funny turn of thought you've got, though! He by no means hanged himself (why hang himself?). On the contrary—he left. I put him on the train just now and sent him off. Pah, how he drinks, let me tell you! We drank three bottles, Predposylov, too—but how he drinks, how he drinks! He sang songs on the train, remembered you, waved his hand, asked to send you his greetings. A scoundrel, don't you think—eh?"

The young man was indeed tipsy; his flushed face, shining eyes, and poorly obedient tongue bore strong witness to that. Velchaninov guffawed at the top of his lungs:

"So they did finally end by pledging brotherhood!—ha, ha! Embraced and wept! Ah, you Schiller-poets!"

"No abuse, please. You know, he gave it up altogether *there*. He was there yesterday and today as well. He peached on us terribly. Nadya's locked up—sitting in the attic. Shouts, tears, but we won't yield! But how he drinks, let me tell you, how he drinks! And you know, he's such *mauvais ton*¹⁶—that is, not *mauvais ton*, but what's the word?... And he kept remembering you, but there's no comparison with you! After all, you are a decent man and in fact once belonged to high society, and only now have been forced to shun—on account of poverty or whatever... Devil knows, I didn't quite understand him."

"Ah, so he told you about me in such terms?"

"He... he—don't be angry. Being a citizen is better than high society. I mean, in our time in Russia one doesn't know whom to respect. You must agree that it's a bad disease of the time, when one doesn't know whom to respect—isn't it true?"

"True, true, but about him?"

"Him? Whom!—ah, yes! Why did he keep saying: the fifty-year-old *but* ruined Velchaninov? Why: *but* ruined and not *and* ruined! He laughs, he repeated it a thousand times. He got on the train, started a song, and wept—it's simply disgusting; it's even pathetic—the man's drunk. Ah, I don't like fools! He started throwing money to the beggars, for the repose of the soul of Lizaveta—his wife, or what?"

"Daughter."

"What's with your hand?"

"I cut it."

"Never mind, it'll go away. You know, devil take him, it's good that he left, but I'll bet that there, where he's gone, he'll get married again at once—isn't it true?"

"But don't you want to get married, too?"

"Me? I'm a different matter—what a one you are, really! If you're fifty years old, then he's certainly sixty; we must be logical here, my dear sir! And you know, formerly, long ago now, I was a pure Slavophile in my convictions, but now we're expecting dawn from the West... Well, good-bye; it's lucky I ran into you without going in; I won't go in, don't ask, I have no time!..."

And he started to dash off.

"Ah, yes, what's the matter with me," he suddenly came back, "he sent me to you with a letter! Here it is. Why didn't you come to see him off?"

Velchaninov returned home and opened the envelope which was addressed to him.

There was not a single line from Pavel Pavlovich in the envelope, but it contained some other letter. Velchaninov recognized the hand. The letter was an old one, on time-yellowed paper, with faded ink, written to him some ten years earlier in Petersburg, two months after he left T—. But this letter had not gone to him; instead of it, he had received another one then; that was clear from the content of the yellowed letter. In this letter Natalia Vassilievna, bidding him farewell forever—just as in the letter he had received then—and confessing to him her love for another man, did not, however, conceal her pregnancy. On the contrary, to console him she promised to find an occasion for conveying the future child to him, assured him that from then on they would have other responsibilities, that their friendship was now sealed forever—in short, there was not much logic, but the goal was the same: that he should deliver her from his love. She even allowed him to visit T—in a year—to see the baby. God knows why she had changed her mind and sent the other letter instead of this one.

Velchaninov, as he read it, turned pale, but he also imagined Pavel Pavlovich finding this letter and reading it for the

first time before the opened heirloom box of ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

"He also must have gone pale as death," he thought, chancing to notice his face in the mirror. "He must have been reading it and closing his eyes, and then suddenly opening them again, hoping the letter would turn to simple blank paper... He probably repeated the experiment three or four times!..."

XVII THE ETERNAL HUSBAND

Almost exactly two years went by after the adventure we have described. We meet Mr. Velchaninov one beautiful summer day in a car of one of our newly opened railways. He was on his way to Odessa to join a friend, for the pleasure of it, and, along with that, on account of another, also quite agreeable, circumstance; through his friend he hoped to arrange for himself a meeting with one extremely interesting woman, with whom he had long wished to become acquainted. Without going into details, we shall limit ourselves to pointing out that he had regenerated, or, better to say, improved greatly over the last two years. Of the former hypochondria almost no traces remained. All that remained to him of various "memories" and anxieties—the consequences of illness—which had begun to beset him two years ago in Petersburg during the time of his then unsuccessful lawsuit—was some hidden shame from the awareness of his former faintheartedness. He was partially recompensed by the certainty that there would be no more of it and that no one would ever know about it. True, he had abandoned society then, had even begun to dress poorly, had hidden somewhere from everyone—and this, of course, *everyone* had noticed. But he had so quickly come forth to plead guilty, and with such a newly revived and self-confident air, that "everyone" forgave at once his momentary falling away; even those of them whom he had stopped greeting, these were the first to acknowledge him and offer him their hand, and what's more without any importunate questions—as if he had been absent all the while somewhere far away on family business, which was no one's affair, and had only just come back. The reason for all these beneficial and sensible changes for the better was, naturally, the winning of the lawsuit. Velchaninov got only sixty thousand roubles—no great thing, granted, but a very important one for him: first of all, he felt himself at once on firm ground again—meaning morally appeased; he knew for certain now that he would not squander this last of his money "like a fool," as he had squandered his first two fortunes, and that he would have enough for the rest of his life. "However tottering their social edifice may be, and whatever they may be trumpeting there," he thought occasionally, lending an ear and eye to all the marvelous and incredible that was being accomplished around him and all over Russia, "whatever people and thought may be regenerating into there, still I will always at least have this fine and tasty dinner which I'm now sitting down to, and thus I'm prepared for anything." This thought, tender to the point of voluptuousness, was gradually taking full possession of him and produced in him even a physical turnabout, not to mention a moral one: he now looked like a totally different man compared with that "marmot" we described two years ago, with whom such indecent stories were beginning to happen—he looked cheerful, bright, imposing. Even the malignant wrinkles that had begun to form around his eyes and on his forehead were almost smoothed out; his complexion even changed—it became whiter, rosier. At the present moment he was sitting in a comfortable seat in a first-class car, and a sweet thought

was hatching in his mind: at the next station there would be a fork and a new line going to the right. "If I were to leave the direct line for a moment and bear to the right, then in no more than two stops I could visit yet another lady of my acquaintance, who has just returned from abroad and is now living in—agreeable for me, but rather boring for her—provincial seclusion; and thus the possibility arises of spending my time no less interestingly than in Odessa, the more so as Odessa won't slip away either..." But he was still hesitant and had not made a final decision; he was "waiting for a push." Meanwhile the station was approaching; the push was also not long in coming.

At this station the train stopped for forty minutes and the passengers were offered dinner. Just at the entrance to the waiting room for first- and second-class passengers there crowded, as usual, an impatient and hurrying multitude of people, and—perhaps also as usual—a scandal took place. One lady, who got out of a second-class car and was remarkably pretty, but somehow too magnificently dressed for a traveler, almost dragged with her, in both hands, an uhlan, a very young and handsome little officer, who was trying to tear free of her grip. The young officer was very tipsy, and the lady, in all probability an older relative, would not let him go, surely for fear he would rush straight to the buffet for a drink. Meanwhile, the uhlan was jostled in the crush by a little merchant, also on a spree, and even outrageously so. This merchant had been stuck at the station for two days already, drinking and squandering money, surrounded by all sorts of comrades, and kept being late for the train to continue his journey. There was a quarrel, the officer shouted, the merchant cursed, the lady was in despair and, drawing the uhlan away from the quarrel, exclaimed to him in a pleading voice: "Mitenka! Mitenka!" The little merchant found this much too scandalous; true, everyone was laughing, but the merchant was the more upset on account of what seemed to him, for some reason, an offense to morality.

"See that—Mitenka!..." he said reproachfully, imitating the lady's piping little voice. "They're no longer ashamed even in public!"

And, staggering over to the lady, who had thrown herself down on the first chair she could find and managed to sit the uhlan down beside her, he looked them both over with contempt and drew out in a singsong voice:

"Slut, slut that you are, your skirt tail's all tattered!"

The lady shrieked and looked around pitifully, waiting for deliverance. She was ashamed, she was afraid, and to crown it all, the officer tore from his chair and, with a yell, rushed for the merchant, but slipped and flopped back into the chair. The guffawing increased around them, while no one even thought of helping; but Velchaninov did help; he suddenly seized the little merchant by the scruff of the neck and, turning him around, shoved him some five steps away from the frightened woman. With that the scandal ended; the little merchant was greatly taken aback both by the shove and by Velchaninov's imposing figure; he was led away at once by his comrades. The dignified physiognomy of the elegantly dressed gentleman produced an imposing impression on the jeerers as well: the laughter ceased. The lady, blushing and almost in tears, began pouring out assurances of her gratitude. The uhlan muttered: "Thanksh, thanksh!"—and made as if

to offer Velchaninov his hand, but instead suddenly decided to lie down across the chairs and stretch his legs out on them.

"Mitenka!" the lady moaned reproachfully, clasping her hands.

Velchaninov was pleased both with the adventure and with its setting. The lady interested him; she was, as could be seen, a rich provincial, dressed magnificently but tastelessly, and with somewhat ridiculous manners—she precisely united in herself everything that guaranteed success to a big-city fop with certain goals regarding women. A conversation started; the lady hotly told and complained about her husband, who "suddenly disappeared somewhere from the car, and that was why it all happened, because it was eternally so, when needed, he'd disappear somewhere..."

"For a necessity..." the uhlan muttered.

"Ah, Mitenka!" she again clasped her hands.

"The husband's going to catch it!" thought Velchaninov.

"What's his name? I'll go and find him," he offered.

"Pal Palych," the uhlan responded.

"Your husband's name is Pavel Pavlovich?" Velchaninov asked with curiosity, and suddenly the familiar bald head thrust itself between him and the lady. Instantly he pictured the Zakhlebinins' garden, innocent games, and the unfortunate bald head constantly thrusting itself between him and Nadezhda Fedoseevna.

"Here you are at last!" the wife cried out hysterically.

It was Pavel Pavlovich himself; in surprise and fear he gazed at Velchaninov, struck dumb before him as before a phantom. His stupefaction was so great that for some time he apparently understood nothing of what his insulted spouse was telling him in an irritable and quick patter. Finally he gave a start and grasped all his horror at once: his own guilt, and about Mitenka, and about this "m'sieur"—for some reason the lady referred this way to Velchaninov—"being our guardian angel and a savior, and you—you are eternally elsewhere when you should be here..."

Velchaninov suddenly burst out laughing.

"But he and I are friends, friends from childhood!" he exclaimed to the astonished lady, familiarly and patronizingly putting his right arm around the shoulders of Pavel Pavlovich, who was smiling a pale smile. "Didn't he ever tell you about Velchaninov?"

"No, never," the wife was slightly dumbstruck.

"But do introduce me to your wife, you perfidious friend!"

"This, Lipochka, is indeed Mr. Velchaninov, this is..." Pavel Pavlovich tried to begin and shamefully broke off. The wife turned red and flashed her eyes at him in spite, obviously for the "Lipochka."

"And imagine not telling me you were getting married, and not inviting me to the wedding, but you, Olympiada..."

"Semyonovna," Pavel Pavlovich prompted.

"Semyonovna," suddenly echoed the falling-asleep uhlan.

"You must forgive him, Olympiada Semyonovna, for me, for the sake of friends meeting... He's a good husband!"

And Velchaninov amicably slapped Pavel Pavlovich on the shoulder.

"But, darling, I only stayed behind... for a moment..." Pavel Pavlovich began to justify himself.

"And abandoned your wife to disgrace!" Lipochka picked up at once. "You're never where you ought to be, and where you oughtn't to be, there you are..."

"Where you oughtn't to be—there where you oughtn't to be... where you oughtn't to be..." the uhlan kept agreeing.

Lipochka was nearly breathless with agitation; she knew it was not nice in front of Velchaninov, and she blushed, but she could not help herself.

"Where you oughtn't to be, you're all too cautious, all too cautious!" escaped from her.

"Under the bed... looks for lovers... under the bed—where he oughtn't to be... oughtn't to be..." Mitenka, too, suddenly became terribly agitated.

But there was nothing to be done with Mitenka. Everything ended pleasantly, however; full acquaintance ensued; Pavel Pavlovich was sent for coffee and bouillon. Olympiada Semyonovna explained to Velchaninov that they were now going from O., where her husband worked, to spend two months on their estate, that it was not far away, only twenty-five miles from this station, that they had a wonderful house and garden there, that they would have guests, that they also had neighbors, and that if Alexei Ivanovich was so good as to wish to visit them "in their seclusion," she would receive him as a guardian angel, because she could not recall without horror what would have happened if... and so on and so forth—in short, "as a guardian angel..."

"And a savior, and a savior," the uhlan ardently insisted.

Velchaninov politely thanked her and replied that he was always ready, that he was a perfectly idle and unoccupied man, and that Olympiada Semyonovna's invitation was only too flattering for him. After which he at once began a merry little conversation, into which he successfully inserted two or three compliments. Lipochka blushed with pleasure and, as soon as Pavel Pavlovich returned, announced to him rapturously that Alexei Ivanovich had been so good as to accept her invitation to be their guest in the country for a whole month and promised to come in a week. Pavel Pavlovich gave a lost smile and said nothing. Olympiada Semyonovna shrugged at him and raised her eyes to heaven. Finally they parted: once more gratitude, again "guardian angel," again "Mitenka," and Pavel Pavlovich finally took his spouse and the uhlan to put them on the train. Velchaninov lit a cigar and began to stroll along the gallery in front of the station; he knew that Pavel Pavlovich would presently come running back again to talk with him before the bell rang. And so it happened. Pavel Pavlovich immediately appeared before him with an anxious question in his eyes and on his whole physiognomy. Velchaninov laughed: he took him "amicably" by the elbow and, drawing him to the nearest bench, sat down and sat him down beside him. He kept silent himself; he wanted Pavel Pavlovich to be the first to speak.

"So you're coming to visit us, sir?" the man babbled, approaching the matter with complete frankness.

"I just knew it! Hasn't changed a bit!" Velchaninov burst out laughing. "But could you really," he again slapped him on the shoulder, "could you really think seriously even for a moment that I would in fact come to visit, and for a whole month at that—ha, ha!"

Pavel Pavlovich became all aroused.

"So you—won't come, sir!" he cried out, not concealing his joy in the least.

"I won't, I won't!" Velchaninov laughed smugly. However, he himself did not understand why he found it so especially funny, but the further it went, the funnier it became to him.

"Can it be... can it really be as you say, sir?" And, having said that, Pavel Pavlovich even jumped up from his seat in trembling expectation.

"But I already said I won't come—what a queer fellow you are!"

"How then... if so, sir, how shall I tell Olympiada Semyonovna, when you don't come in a week, after she's been waiting, sir?"

"That's a hard one! Tell her I broke a leg or something like that."

"She won't believe it, sir," Pavel Pavlovich drew out in a plaintive little voice.

"And you'll catch hell?" Velchaninov went on laughing. "But I notice, my poor friend, that you do tremble before your beautiful spouse—eh?"

Pavel Pavlovich tried to smile, but it did not come off. That Velchaninov had renounced his visit—that, of course, was good; but that he spoke familiarly about his wife—now, that was bad. Pavel Pavlovich cringed. Velchaninov noticed it. Meanwhile the second bell had already rung; from the faraway car came a piping little voice, anxiously summoning Pavel Pavlovich. He fidgeted on the spot, but did not run at the summons, apparently expecting something more from Velchaninov—of course, a further assurance that he would not visit them.

"What is your wife's former name?" Velchaninov said, as if not noticing Pavel Pavlovich's anxiety at all.

"I took her from our local vicar, sir," the man replied, glancing at the train in bewilderment and cocking an ear.

"Ah, I understand, for her beauty."

Pavel Pavlovich cringed again.

"And who is this Mitenka to you?"

"He's just so, sir; our distant relative—that is, mine, sir, my late cousin's son, Golubchikov, demoted for disorderly conduct, and now restored again; so we've equipped him... An unfortunate young man, sir..."

"Well, well," thought Velchaninov, "everything's in order—the full setup!"

"Pavel Pavlovich!" again a distant summons was heard from the car, now with quite an irritated note in the voice.

"Pal Palych!" came another, hoarse voice.

Pavel Pavlovich again started fidgeting and fussing about, but Velchaninov seized him firmly by the elbow and stopped him.

"And do you want me to go right now and tell your wife how you wanted to put a knife in me—eh?"

"How can you, how can you, sir!" Pavel Pavlovich was terribly frightened, "God keep you from it, sir!"

"Pavel Pavlovich! Pavel Pavlovich!" the voices were heard again.

"Well, go, then!" Velchaninov released him at last, continuing to laugh good-naturedly.

"So you won't come, sir!" Pavel Pavlovich, all but in despair, whispered a last time, and even clasped his hands before him, palms together, as in old times.

"No, I swear to you, I won't come! Run, or there'll be trouble!"

And he sweepingly offered him his hand—offered it and gave a start: Pavel Pavlovich did not take his hand, he even drew his own back.

The third bell rang.

In an instant something strange happened with the two men; they both as if transformed. Something wavered as it were and suddenly snapped in Velchaninov, who had been laughing so much only a moment before. He firmly and furiously seized Pavel Pavlovich by the shoulder.

"If I, if I offer you this hand here," he showed him the palm of his left hand, on which there clearly remained a big scar from the cut, "then you might well take it!" he whispered with trembling and pale lips.

Pavel Pavlovich also paled and his lips also trembled. Some sort of spasms suddenly passed over his face.

"And Liza, sir?" he murmured in a quick whisper—and suddenly his lips, cheeks, and chin quivered, and tears poured from his eyes. Velchaninov stood before him like a post.

"Pavel Pavlovich! Pavel Pavlovich!" screams came from the car, as if someone were being slaughtered there—and suddenly the whistle blew.

Pavel Pavlovich came to his senses, clasped his hands, and dashed off at top speed; the train had already started, but he somehow managed to hold on and climb into his car in flight. Velchaninov remained at the station and continued his journey only toward evening, having waited for the next train in the same direction. He did not go to the right, to his provincial lady acquaintance—he was much too out of sorts. And how sorry he was later!